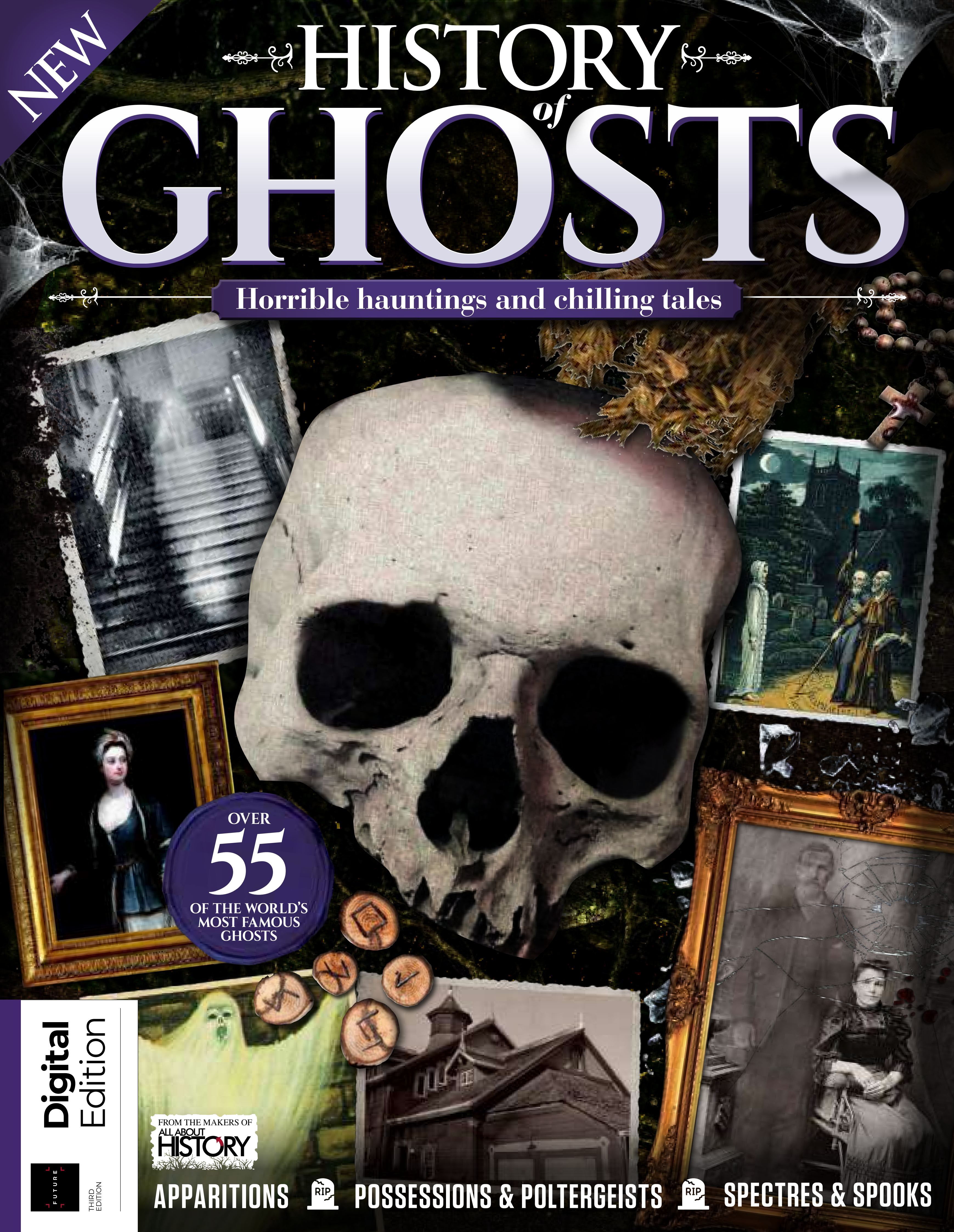

NEW

HISTORY of GHOSTS

Horrible hauntings and chilling tales

OVER 55 OF THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS GHOSTS

Digital Edition

FROM THE MAKERS OF ALL ABOUT HISTORY

FUTURE

THIRD EDITION

APPARITIONS RIP POSSESSIONS & POLTERGEISTS RIP SPECTRES & SPOOKS

WELCOME

Have you ever seen a ghost? This bookazine is packed with spooks, spectres, and horrible hauntings! Discover the history of ghost beliefs from the ancient world to the present day. Find out why people believe in ghosts, and the possible scientific explanations behind haunted houses, spectral lights, scary sounds, and spooky apparitions. Explore hoaxes and horrors from some of the world's most eerie locations, and delve into stories of the phantoms, wraiths and spirits that are thought to frequent them. Learn about the legends and folklore that surround ghost beliefs around the world, from famous figures like headless horsemen to tragic tales of the colourful and ethereal ladies that haunt woods, castles and stately homes. Plus, check out modern-day phantasms, possessions and poltergeists, and the paranormal investigators who use traditional spiritual techniques as well as today's technology to establish whether there really are spectral presences from beyond the veil troubling homes, offices, public buildings, families and communities to this day.

FUTURE

HISTORY of GHOSTS

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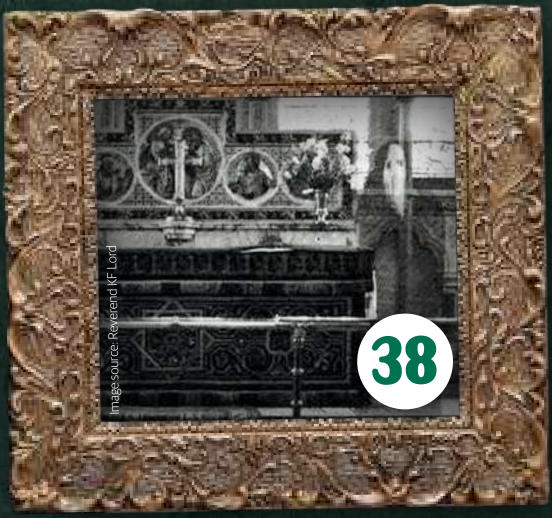

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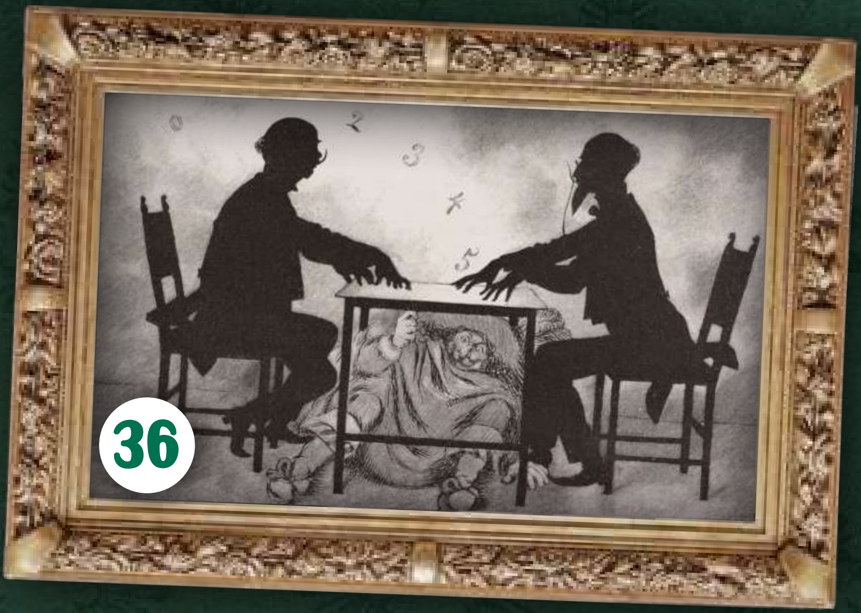
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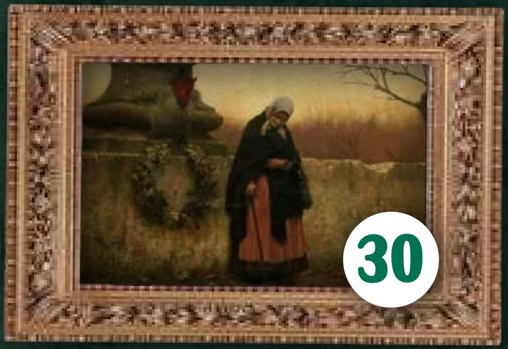
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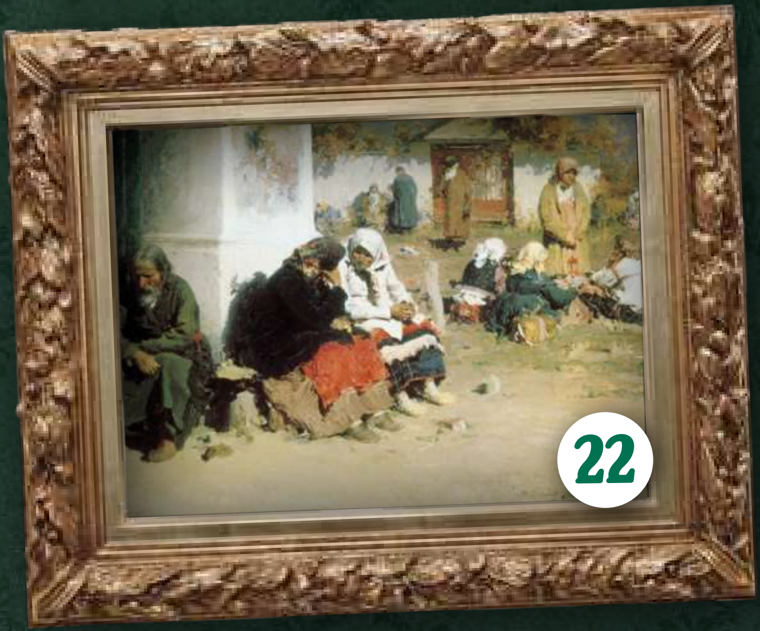
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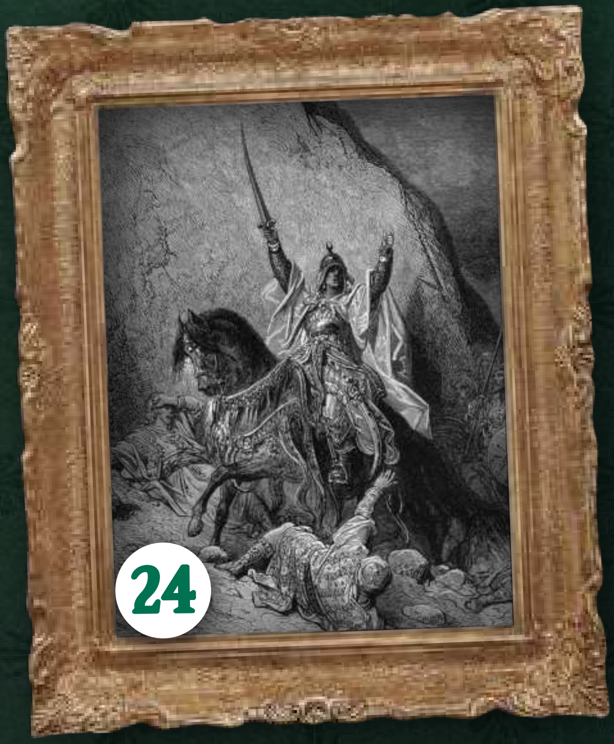
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Ghost beliefs go back even before the dawn of recorded history

Image source/Getty Images

GHOSTLORE: STUDYING GHOSTS AND APPARITIONS

Ghosts are a worldwide, if otherworldly, phenomenon that can scare or comfort – and may offer us clues about the nature of our reality

Written by Ben Gazur

Of all the humans who have ever lived, only a fraction are alive now. Behind all of us lurk the ghosts of dozens of people who have passed on into death. For those that are left behind we can see reflections of them in all the places they used to haunt in life. For some spirits, though, it seems as if haunting memories are insufficient - sometimes the dead are said to come back as ghosts.

Tales of ghosts and ghost-sightings can be found in almost every culture and across the millennia. As soon as writing was invented people began to set down their beliefs regarding the afterlife and those who sometimes returned from it. Why some spirits seem unable to rest in the hereafter is a question just as old as the appearance of ghosts themselves. Ghostlore - the folklore of ghosts - can provide examples of vengeful ghosts, mournful phantoms, and tender spirits unable to give up on their loved ones. From the ancient to the modern world, people across the globe have claimed to have been visited by ghosts.

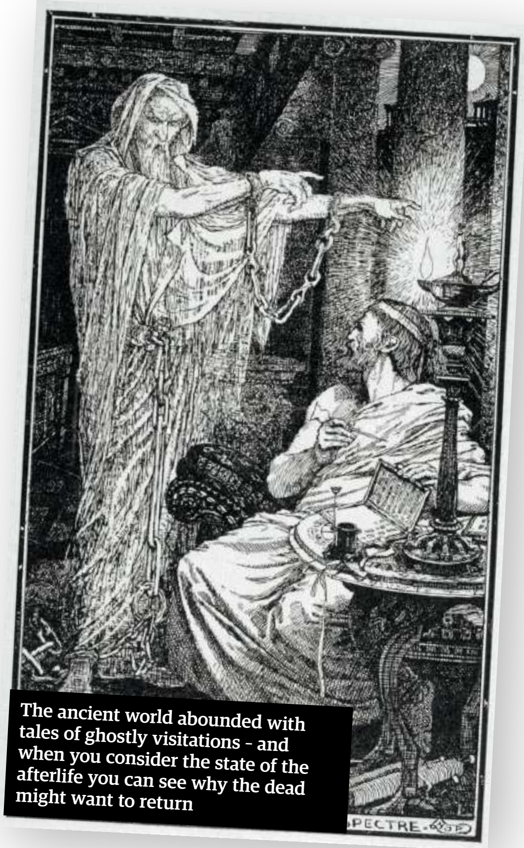
Indeed, despite being dead, ghosts are not just a thing of the past. One 2019 poll found that 45 per cent of Americans believe in their existence. For all that rationality has sought to banish spectres and bogeymen from our lives, there seems to be something in our minds that cannot accept that death is the end. How can we square our materialist understanding of the universe with one that is inhabited by ghosts?

Mythology and religion have both found ways to explain the idea of ghosts. Scientific study has also been used to both examine and debunk claims of ghostly activity. For the open-minded explorer into ghostlore, however, the best method of understanding ghosts is to examine the evidence for yourself.

> "For some spirits, though, it seems as if haunting memories are insufficient – sometimes the dead are said to come back as ghosts"

GHOSTS IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

In antiquity, ghosts were an accepted part of the natural order – given ancient notions of the afterlife their return was all too understandable


The ancient world abounded with tales of ghostly visitations - and when you consider the state of the afterlife you can see why the dead might want to return

The civilisations of Mesopotamia provide us with some of our earliest literary sources. From their cuneiform tablets we get to see how they viewed death. The *Epic of Gilgamesh*, written around 1800 BCE, is a tale steeped in death. When the hero Gilgamesh witnesses his friend Enkidu die he suddenly realises that he too will one day die. Death and the nature of the afterlife have fascinated humans from the beginning.

When we consider how the Sumerians viewed the afterlife, though, it is hardly surprising that Gilgamesh did not wish to go there. It was a dark and dreary place where the souls of people continued to exist as shades. In a story known as *Gilgamesh and Enkidu in the Netherworld* we are told how the shades of the dead are kept happy by grave offerings and prayers offered by their living family. The man who has only one son "weeps bitterly" while the man with seven sons performing rituals after his death is "as a companion of the gods." Meanwhile, the woman who never gave birth is described as "Like a... pot, she is thrown away violently."

Performing the proper rites for the dead was a method of keeping shades content in many early religions. In ancient Egypt there was a well defined road that a soul travelled along passing from birth, to death, to the afterlife. As long as the soul of the departed was treated with respect it could expect a quiet and blessed eternity. The provision of grave goods, a decorated tomb, and a preserved body ensured the dead would be happy with their lot.

When a tomb was disturbed or a body looted then the shade could return to the Earth as a ghost. Even a family skimping on money and providing a cheap burial could be cause for a spirit to return to haunt the living. One man thought his illness was caused by the ghost of his dead wife. He wrote a letter to her shade and deposited it in her tomb describing all the things he did for her in life and the lengths he went to to give a decent burial. "But what thou hast done to me is to have laid hands on me although I had nothing wicked to thee."

In one Egyptian text a priest of Amun called Khonsemhab meets with the spirit of a

Defining moment

Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld

18th century BCE

The *Epic of Gilgamesh* and other poems from ancient Mesopotamia provide the earliest literary view of the afterlife and ghosts. Gilgamesh is horrified by the idea of dying and seeks to live forever. He fails. In one version of the tale his friend Enkidu willingly goes to the Netherworld but is trapped there, unable to return. Only the gods breaking a hole in the Earth allows his ghost to return. The Netherworld of the Mesopotamians was not an enviable one. The dead lived a pale imitation of life there.

A HISTORY OF GHOSTS

~1500 BCE

Tomb raiders
Despite the Egyptian afterlife being a paradise it was known that the improperly buried could return to vex the living. Individuals could sicken and die if a vengeful ghost had reason to curse them.
~1500 BCE

~1400 BCE

The dead don't die
Some of the earliest texts of Chinese literature, recorded as soon as writing developed, concerned ghosts and restless spirits. The proper burial of the deceased was of grave concern if you wanted their souls to pass on peacefully.
~1400 BCE

8TH CENTURY BCE

Heroic ghosts
In the Homeric epics of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* ghosts and spirits frequently appear. The afterlife they describe is a gloomy abode where souls flutter around like bats and only blood can induce them to talk.
8th century BCE

472 BCE

Persian ghosts
The oldest surviving Greek tragedy is *The Persians* by Aeschylus and features the ghost of King Darius as a character. Summoned up from the dead, Darius' spirit rebukes his living family for their hubris.
472 BCE

2ND CENTURY CE

The first sceptics
Belief in ghosts seems to have been universal in the ancient world. The first text expressing doubt was written by Lucian and explains how the philosopher Democritus would hide in graveyards to scare people out of believing in ghosts.
2nd century CE

THE GHOST IN THE BATHHOUSE

The Greek historian Plutarch writing in the 1st and 2nd centuries CE described the situation that led to a bathhouse becoming home to a terrifying spectre. It all started when a Roman army captain came to town in Chaeroneia. He took a fancy to a local boy of surpassing beauty named Damon, and did everything in his power to seduce the boy. Damon refused the advances but feared the captain would turn violent if rejected too often. Damon and some friends gathered together one night and murdered the Roman captain and several of his colleagues. When Damon was condemned to death for his crime he slew the town council too. Damon and the gang took to raiding and robbing in the countryside. Something had to be done. The town invited Damon back, begging his forgiveness. When Damon entered the bathhouse to clean himself however, the townsfolk killed him. Plutarch tells us that for a long time afterwards spectres were seen in the baths and terrible groans heard. Eventually the bathhouse was walled up. Even 200 years later in Plutarch's time, however, the place was said to still echo with the eldritch moans of the murdered Damon.

man called Nebusemekh. Nebusemekh has a problem. His tomb has crumbled away and he no longer receives offerings as no one knows where he is buried. The priest promises to locate it and build a new one for him but Nebusemekh has his doubts - apparently the ghost has heard similar promises before from people he haunts.

For the Chinese, respect for ancestors was vital if you were to benefit from their aid. A displeased dead relative could perform all sorts of mischief. If the burial was performed incorrectly then a dead person would not be as gone as you might expect. The dead might call to anyone for help, however. In one tale a young girl's spirit visits a family and causes so much commotion that they stuff her ghost into a bag and toss it down a well. The next night she reappears and the same happens. It is only when the family carve out a log and place her spirit in it that she is satisfied with her burial and passes on into the afterlife.

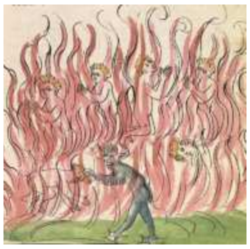
Ancient Greek religion of the pre-classical age had no glorious afterlife. In the *Odyssey* the hero Odysseus meets with Achilles, who had shone so brightly in life. When Odysseus tries to comfort the poor shade of the dead Achilles he is told "By god, I'd rather slave on Earth for another man - some dirt-poor tenant farmer who scrapes to keep alive - than rule down here over all the breathless dead." For later Greeks and Romans there were mystery cults that offered the dead a way to a better afterlife, but even then their baleful shades could come back to the world of the living. Pliny the Younger described how a man named Athenodorus visited a haunted house in Athens. Interested in the ghost he stayed up all night with a lamp. He heard the ghost rattling chains and eventually saw him. When he followed the ghost into the garden he noted the spot where the spirit vanished. The next day he had the spot dug up and a skeleton, still draped in chains, was located. Given a fitting burial, the ghost was never seen again.

The Hebrew Bible is surprisingly quiet on the matter of what happens to us after death. However in the Book of 1 Samuel, King Saul is faced with a mighty army of Philistines. The prophet Samuel who might have advised him is dead and Saul does not know how to overcome his enemies. To contact Samuel the king goes to a magical woman, the Witch of Endor, who is able to summon up the ghost of the prophet. The words of the ghost are of little comfort to Saul but they do offer us a glimpse of mediumship in the ancient world.

The classical view of ghosts and spirits as pale shades came to an end with the supremacy of Christianity. The Christian afterlife was an altogether more jolly affair for departed souls than the gloomy fields awaiting dead Greeks and Romans. Yet even the followers of Jesus had their concerns about ghosts. After the resurrection of Jesus, the Gospel of Luke tells us that the disciples who saw him were afraid because they thought he was a ghost. Jesus has to convince them he really is back by telling them "It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."

Defining moment

Purgatory 12th century CE



Ghosts were hard for Christians to accept as they seem to be outside of God's plan of placing people eternally in heaven or hell. The popular belief in a third place, a fiery purgatory where sins were burned away before people went to heaven, became accepted Church doctrine. The souls of those in purgatory were thought to be able to visit the living. Pope Gregory the Great said that people who saw ghosts should offer masses for the sake of the dead person's soul. Prayers could speed people out of purgatory and towards eternal peace.

Defining moment

The Fox sisters 1848 CE

While many claimed to have contacted the dead before, a mania for spiritualist séances began in 1848 when the young Fox sisters of New York reported hearing rapping noises caused by ghosts. By asking questions and listening for knocking replies, the girls were able interpret the dead. Soon séances were taking place across the United States and Europe. Even after the Fox sisters admitted they had perpetrated a fraud, many continued to believe in the power of mediums. Spiritualism became an accepted belief for many and continues to this day.

1487 CE

- ***Hammer of the Witches***
  Widespread belief in spirits, demons, and ghosts broke out into fear of witchcraft in the Middle Ages. A book, the *Malleus Maleficarum* (*Hammer of the Witches*) was written to guide people on how to recognise witches and spirits.
  1487 CE

16TH CENTURY CE

- **Necromancy**
  Renaissance magicians like John Dee and Edward Kelley believed that the spirits of the dead could be called forth at will. Such ghosts could be used to gain arcane wisdom or perform magical feats.
  16th century CE

1914 CE

- **Angels of Mons**
  During the Battle of Mons a force of angelic bowmen was said to be seen fighting on the side of the British. Others claimed it was St George, or the spirits of dead soldiers.
  1914 CE

20TH CENTURY CE

- **Ghosts or aliens**
  Ghostly lights have been reported throughout the centuries but in the 20th century unexplained lights began to be attributed to alien spaceships instead of luminous ghosts. Still unexplained, these UFOs continue to be reported.
  20th century CE

THE HAUNTED AGES

The coming of Christianity left people seeking an explanation for how it was souls continued to visit the Earth with such spooky regularity

Bernado: *Looks it not like the king? mark it, Horatio.*

Horatio: *Most like: it harrows me with fear and wonder.*

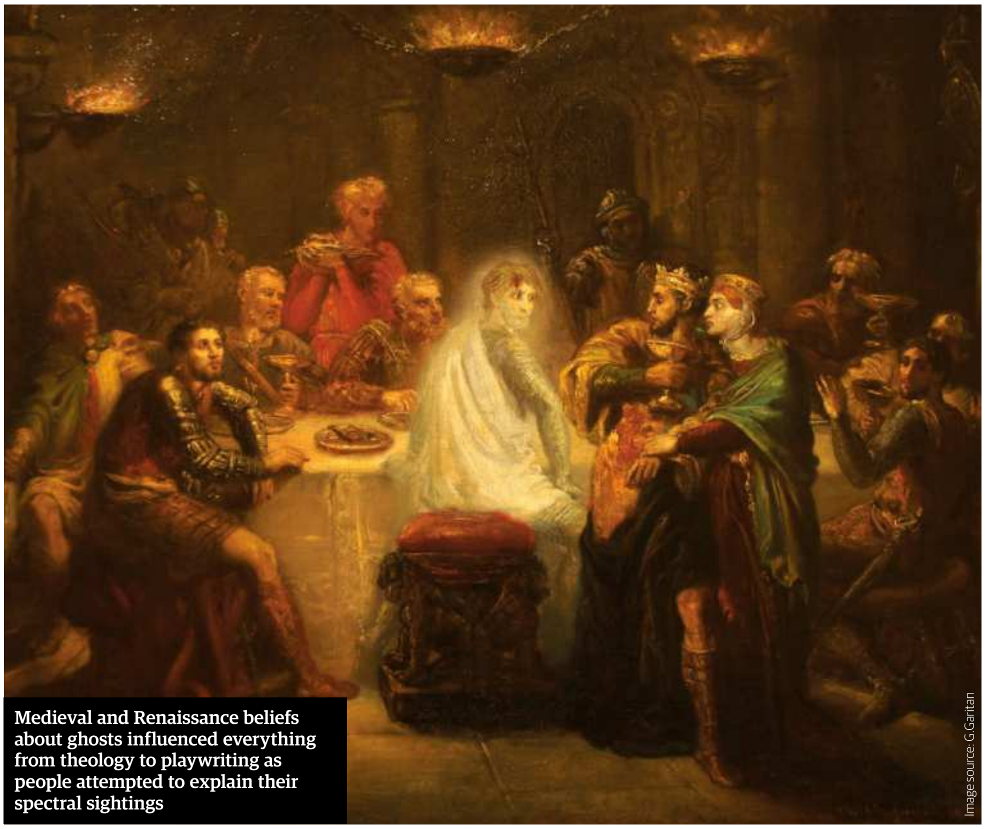
So begins the visitation by the ghost of the king of Denmark in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Seen by multiple people on multiple occasions, this is no figment of the imagination but a real haunting. As one witness says, "Before my God, I might not this believe, Without the sensible and true avouch, Of mine own eyes." We might think of medieval and Renaissance people as overly credulous but they knew how to weigh evidence just as well as we do - and they believed in ghosts.

The medieval period in Europe was profoundly shaped by Christian belief. For some the idea of ghosts sat uncomfortably with that faith. God sat in judgement of all souls and the good went to heaven and the bad to hell. This seems to leave little room for ghosts, because how can the dead return to Earth if they have been consigned to an eternal afterlife by the almighty? Yet ghosts persisted to be seen and believed in throughout Europe.

The Bible even instructed followers in how to interpret the ghosts they saw or heard of. "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world." Though the ghostly apparition may be real, they were told, it might not really be who it appeared to be. A ghost could be a demon in disguise waiting to ensnare the unwary. Indeed, because ghosts seemed to be outside of God's plan, they were in all likelihood agents of the Devil.

Even the great thinkers of the Church were said to have been visited by ghosts. St Thomas of Aquinas was visited by the spirit of a friend who had died, though Thomas did not know it yet. "I am, in fact, dead: but I have permission to visit you because of your merits." He was also said to have been visited by his dead sister who told him that she was in purgatory and was in need of his prayers to get into heaven.

It was with the development of the idea of purgatory that ghosts became Christianised.



Medieval and Renaissance beliefs about ghosts influenced everything from theology to playwriting as people attempted to explain their spectral sightings

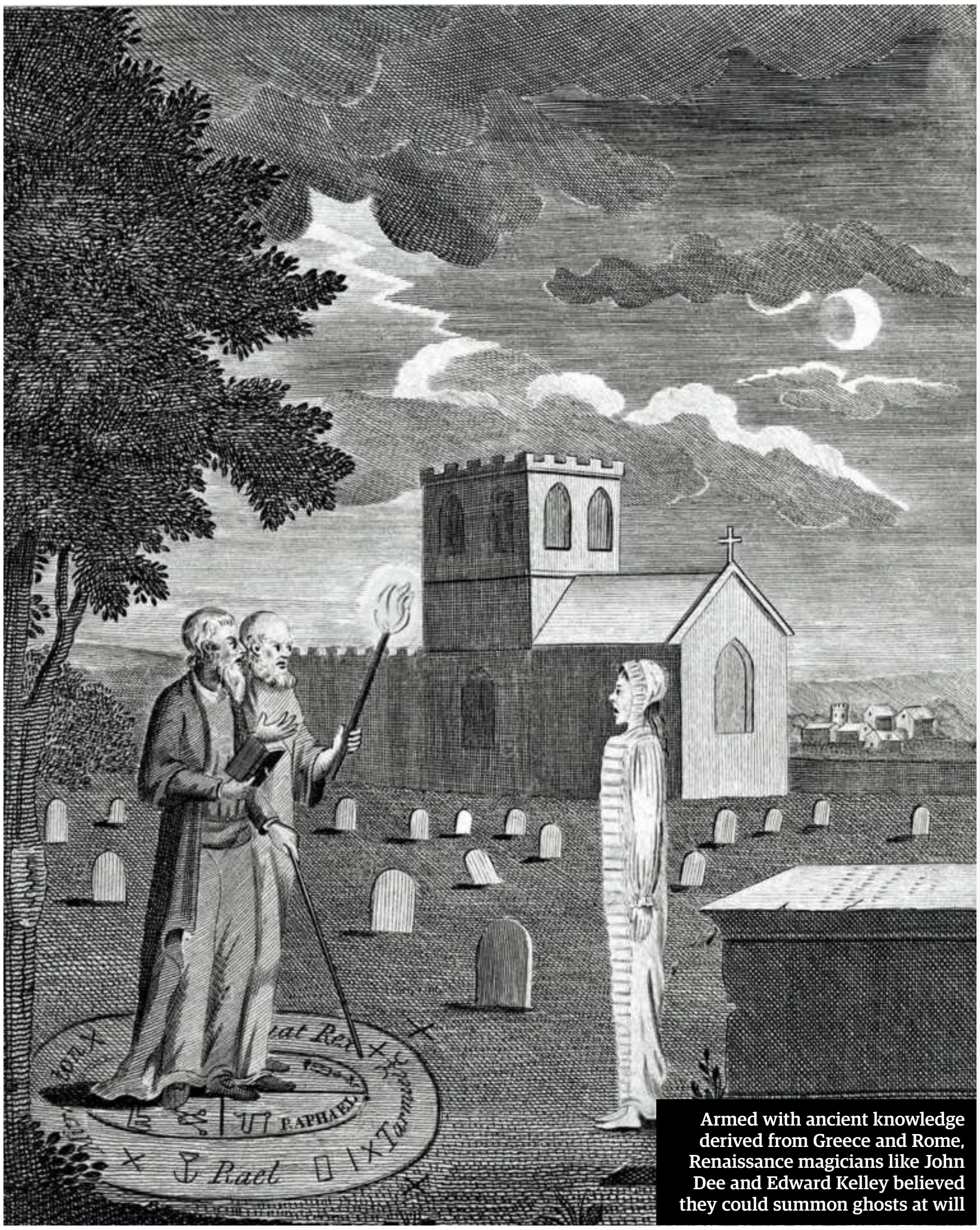
Image source: G.Garitan

By the end of the 12th century belief in a third place in the afterlife, purgatory, seemed to allow the wiggle room needed for ghosts to enter the world. Those in purgatory were souls who had not committed crimes serious enough for eternal punishment but still required purification of their sins before they could enter heaven. Perhaps ghosts were the spirits of those in purgatory, such as St Thomas' sister.

Some ghosts made clear reference to purgatory, such as the dark shadow of a mistress who visited her lover to tell him "I can be freed from the punishment I am suffering, if masses were said for me by good priests." One anonymous monk serving at Byland Abbey in the 15th century wrote down several tales featuring ghosts:

"It happened that this man was talking with the master of the ploughmen and was walking with him in the field. And suddenly the master fled in great terror and the other man was left struggling with a ghost who foully tore his garments. And at last he gained the victory and conjured him. And he being conjured confessed that he had been a certain canon of Newburgh, and that he had been excommunicated for certain silver spoons which he had hidden in a certain place. He therefore begged the living man that he would go to the place he mentioned and take them away and carry them to the prior and ask for absolution. And he did so and he found the silver spoons in the place mentioned. And after absolution the ghost henceforth rested in peace."

The church profited from the belief in purgatory as money was often left for masses to be sung for the dead to speed them out of purgatory. Some people even set up chantries



Armed with ancient knowledge derived from Greece and Rome, Renaissance magicians like John Dee and Edward Kelley believed they could summon ghosts at will

- buildings specifically funded for prayers and masses to be said for their souls.

The Renaissance saw a flourishing of European culture as a love for antiquity was rediscovered, and people began to question the authorities that controlled them. It was still an age of deep faith, however, where people worried about what would become of them in the afterlife. Books describing how to die well and be reconciled with God quickly became best sellers. As can be seen from the ghosts in Shakespeare's plays, ghosts were still very much in the public imagination.

The Protestant Reformation, however, generally viewed purgatory with suspicion as few if any Biblical allusions are made to such a state. Many Protestants would view a ghost a clear work of the Devil. James I of England in his book *Daemonologie* noted how few ghosts were seen since the split with Roman Catholicism: "For as we know, moe Ghostes and spirites were seene, nor tongue can tell, in the time of blinde Papistrie in these Countries, where now by the contrarie, a man shall scarcely all his time here once of such things."

Yet even as the existence of ghosts suddenly lacked a clear theological backing they continued to be seen by many people. Renaissance magic took a keen interest in necromancy and the calling forth of spirits. Edward Kelley, who worked with Elizabeth I's advisor John Dee, claimed he could speak to the dead through a special stone. Folk traditions also held on to the existence of ghosts. Those who waited outside a church on St Mark's Eve at midnight were believed to see a procession of ghosts – though they were, strictly, fetches: ghosts of those who'd die in the coming year.

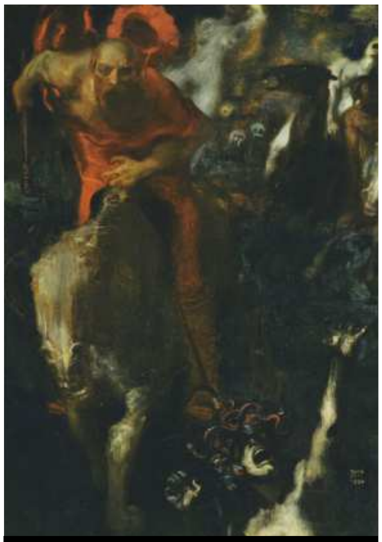
THE WILD HUNT

Across Europe in the Middle Ages, many people reported a noisy group of ghosts and spirits that could sweep down on them out of nowhere. Known variously as the Wild Hunt, the Furious Army, and the Devil's Hunt, it was said that a cavalcade of spectres raising a horrible din would ride down those who happened to get in their way.

In the *Peterborough Chronicle* for 1127 a sighting of the Wild Hunt is recorded. "Many men both saw and heard a great number of huntsmen hunting. The huntsmen were black, huge, and hideous, and rode on black horses and on black he-goats, and their hounds were jet black, with eyes like saucers, and horrible."

In some versions these ghostly hunters were led by figures from pagan mythology, such as the Norse god Wodan. Over time, and with the loss of his followers to Christianity, the Norse god had become a figure of fear and devilry. At other times and in other places it was unclear whether the Wild Hunt was composed of demons or restless spirits.

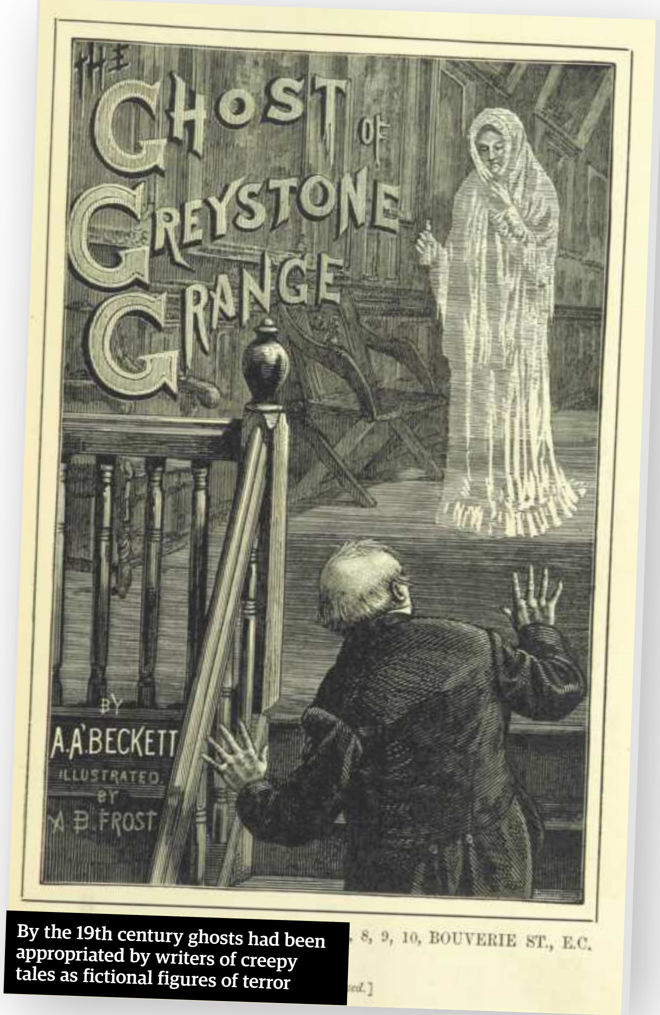
Some thought that unbaptised children might form part of the company, while others thought that the hunters might be chasing down those who died without the grace of God.



The Wild Hunt was a popular folk motif in many European countries, which gave birth to many myths related to these ghostly hunters

AN OBSESSION WITH DEATH

In an age when 'resurrection men' might dig up your corpse for anatomical study, there were those who feared the dead were escaping their graves in less physical form



By the 19th century ghosts had been appropriated by writers of creepy tales as fictional figures of terror

In 1681 a book called *Sadducismus Triumphatus* was published that scoffed at those sceptics who denied witches and demons stalked the land. The publisher in his preface defended the accounts of ghosts included in the work, saying they "seemed very well attested and highly credible and… contain nothing but what is consonant to right Reason and sound Philosophy." In the witch hunts that proceeded it, and particularly in the Salem trials that were to follow, ghosts and spirits played a major role.

Because of the shy nature of ghosts, they sometimes only appeared to one person at a time. Even in a crowded courtroom a young girl might see the spectre of a witch that was visible to no one else present. On the evidence of that apparition alone, a person could be condemned to die.

The late 17th century was the last hurrah for the witch hunters, who soon found public opinion turning against their activities and charges of witchcraft being rejected by courts across Europe and America. The Age of Enlightenment that flourished in the 18th century saw intellectuals taking on more sceptical attitudes that mocked belief in witches and ghosts alike. The Deist intellectuals put their faith in a universe that ran like clockwork. They thought that a watchmaker God had started it running but had since stepped back, and no longer interfered with his creation. Ghosts then, if they existed, were simply part of the order of things. Learned men found themselves stuck between their theories and people's experiences. As Dr Johnson said:

"It is wonderful that five thousand years have now elapsed since the creation of the world and still it is undecided whether or not there has ever been an instance of the spirit of any person appearing after death. All argument is against it; but all belief is for it."

Despite the rise of science, the Victorian era featured an uptick in ghost beliefs across all social classes, fuelled in part by Gothic novels

Even as the philosophers tried to strip away the miraculous from biblical accounts of ghosts and apparitions, the bulk of Europe remained staunchly Christian. One thinker wrote that he believed in ghosts "by the respect of the Holy Scriptures, the testimony of the whole of antiquity, and the tradition of the Church." Belief in the supernatural went hand in hand with religious belief, and folk culture was still vibrant in the more rural areas of the Continent - though people were less ready to believe everything. In 1737 in Aberdeenshire, Geordie Watt found his mother was tormenting him from beyond the grave. Her ghost would regularly appear to Watt and his brothers and "reveal several things to them for their temporal and eternal good, which they were to behove and do at their highest peril." The main thing that his mother's ghost insisted on was that Geordie marry his maid Tibbie Mortimer. Watt found this unusual so consulted his minister about what he should do. The minister accompanied Watt to his home and immediately saw the ghost just as it was described. "The appearance which first presented to his view was about the bulk of an ordinary woman, covered with white clean linen." So the minister decided to see if this was a real ghost "he made such a trial of the apparition as he thought agreeable to the principles of the Christian revelation and true philosophy" - that is to say, he hit it with a stick - and found that the ghost was actually Tibbie Mortimer herself.

"The Age of Enlightenment saw intellectuals taking on more sceptical attitudes the mocked belief in witches and ghosts alike"

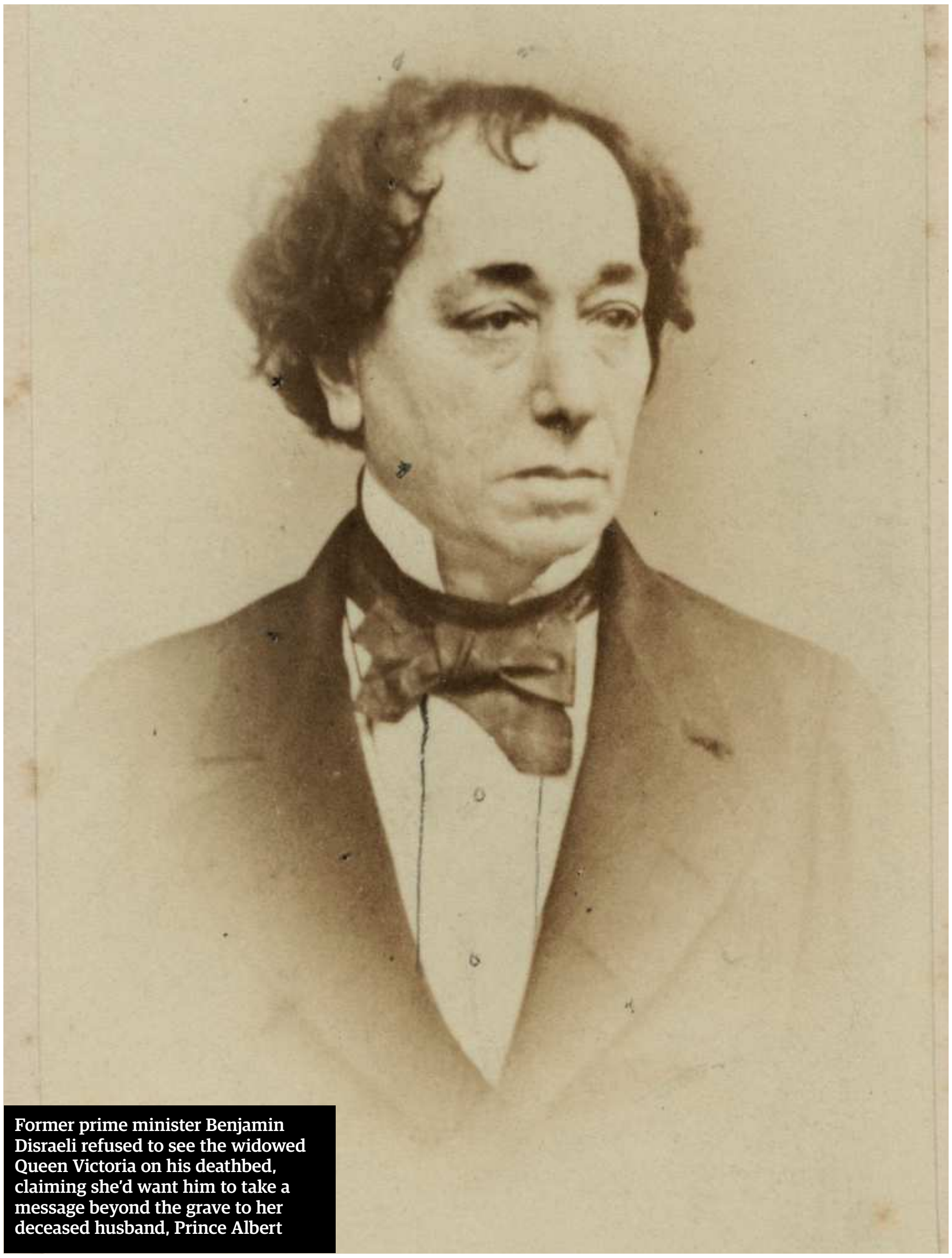
With a better educated public willing to test the reality of ghosts, they began, paradoxically, to haunt people's imaginations more in literature. Gothic tales such as Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*, which features a monstrously large and ghostly foot, became hugely popular. Science

SCRATCHING FANNY OF COCK LANE

One of the most infamous ghosts of the 18th century in Britain was one that haunted Cock Lane in London. When William Kent's wife Elizabeth died her sister Fanny moved into the family home to care for the widower. Soon the two became lovers and moved to Cock Lane to live as Mr and Mrs Kent in rooms rented from the Parsons family. When Fanny was pregnant and due to give birth she suddenly fell ill and died. Her spirit would not rest for long.

The daughters of the Parsons family began to hear noises near their bed at night. Scratching, as if a cat was hidden in the walls, left the family troubled. Soon suspicion fell on the unquiet ghost of Fanny and the legend of Scratching Fanny was born. Devising a system of knocking to communicate with the spirit, the Parsons were able to find out that Fanny had not died from smallpox but rather a lethal dose of arsenic given to her by her 'husband'.

The great and good of London society began to attend séances to speak to Fanny's ghost. Close examination of Elizabeth Parsons discovered a piece of wood she used to make the knocking sounds. Kent brought the Parsons family to court for blackening his name. All were found guilty and forced to pay a fine for their imposture.



Former prime minister Benjamin Disraeli refused to see the widowed Queen Victoria on his deathbed, claiming she'd want him to take a message beyond the grave to her deceased husband, Prince Albert

may be great for solving practical problems but for writers looking to scare or move readers it proved radically insufficient. As Walpole himself wrote, "A god, at least a ghost, was absolutely necessary to frighten us out of too much senses."

The Victorian era saw a similar reaction against too much hard-nosed theorising. The age of Darwin's theory of evolution was also the age of Dickens and his popular Christmas ghost stories. Despite scientists like Ferriar and Hibbert postulating that ghost sightings were simply caused by accidents in the brain and overstimulated optic nerves, people still desperately craved to hear and see their departed loved ones. Sentimentality was a hallmark of the 19th century.

The brooding figure of the widowed Queen Victoria still mourning her beloved Albert after decades fell heavily over British society. So keen was she to contact her dead husband that Disraeli on his deathbed is said to have refused to see her. He quipped "No, it is better not. She would only ask me to take a message to Albert." The Victorian obsession with death grew alongside the ornate graveyards that now dotted England with large and elaborate tombs. Whitby grew in large part because of the black jet mourning jewellery it produced.

It was just a short step from memorialising the departed to attempting to talk with them. Spiritualism, communicating directly with the dead, became popular following 1848, when the Fox sisters of New York claimed to have made contact with the spirits of the dead, who communicated through making rapping noises on their table. Their celebrity sparked a mania for spiritual mediums in many countries - even after the Fox sisters admitted it had been a hoax in 1888. But in an age when a simple cut could cause a fatal infection, infant mortality was high, and especially after the American Civil War, there were too many mourning people seeking comfort to ignore the call of mediumship. Ghosts could not be busted by science so easily.

MODERN DAY GHOSTS

Despite the best efforts of sceptics to debunk ghost sightings, many people even today claim to have been visited by those who have died

The 20th century saw both a pinnacle of scientific revolution and terrible mass slaughters of humanity. The discoveries of scientists and the theories of philosophers were wholly inadequate in the face of the scale of human suffering through world wars and holocausts. Ghosts and spiritualism made people feel connected to something outside this world of horror and tragedy.

The 20th century began with British newspapers still regularly reporting on ghostly apparitions. One 1904 case saw a manager of a Richmond inn bedevilled by a nightly visitor. Each night he would be awoken by unearthly sounds and lights shining in his face. "The ghost is a long luminous figure, dressed in some flimsy white and blue material." The manager took a somewhat imperialist attitude to these spectral intrusions. "If I see it again I shall shoot at it."

The domestic ghost, however, seemed to be dying out in the first decades of the 20th century. It was the shock of the First World War that saw a renewed interest in spiritual matters. With every village across Europe suffering heavy losses in their young men, bereft families wanted to know their loved ones were at peace. Mediums and spiritualists were once again in vogue. In America the Ouija board became a popular way to check up on soldiers fighting on another continent.

Soldiers found themselves faced with death every day and reported seeing many strange spectres in the trenches. Some popular visions such as the Angels of Mons, a ghostly battalion of archers fighting on the side of the British, were eagerly reported at home. Others were private visitations recorded in the diaries of those on the front lines.

One Canadian soldier, Will Bird, described being woken by the ghost of his brother who had died two years before. "Steve grinned as he released my hands, then put his warm hand over my mouth as I started to shout my happiness." Steve led his brother out of the shelter he had been slumbering in just as a shell obliterated the spot where he had been sleeping. Other ghost sightings had less happy endings. One British soldier saw a figure in a blue skirt and bonnet. Realising it was his dead mother he remarked "I believe she's come for me." A burst of shrapnel killed him on the spot.

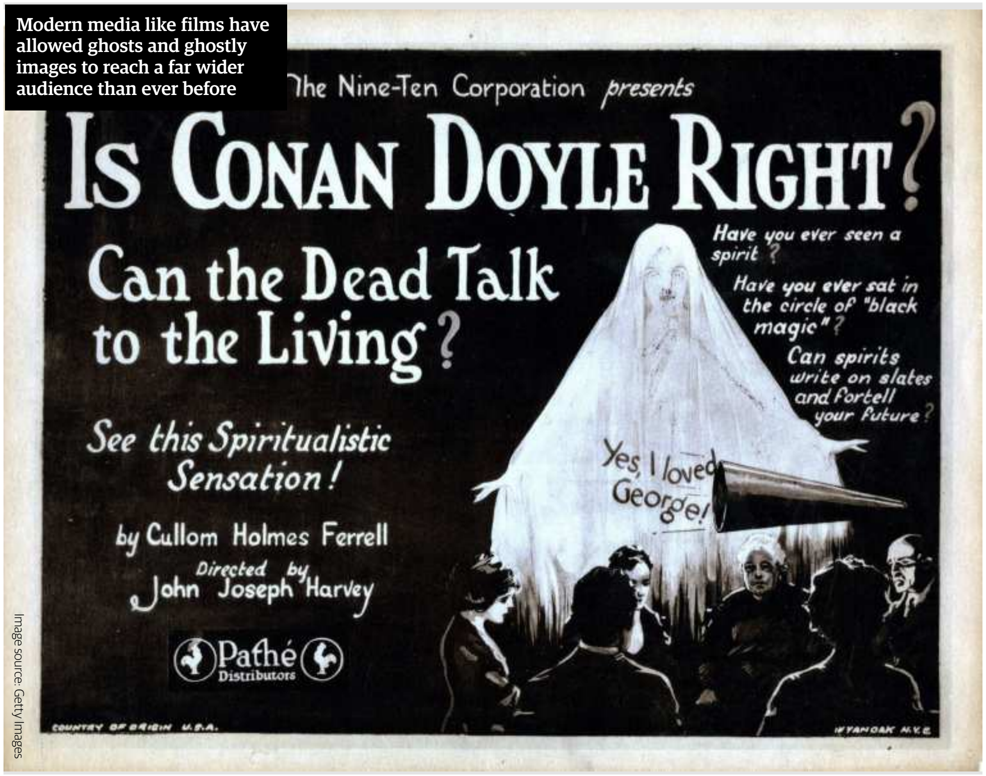
Far from debunking ghost beliefs, 20th and 21st century technologies have been used to fuel the activities of mediums and ghost-hunters

The Second World War also left terrible spiritual scars in many places that have spawned many ghostly legends. Many pilots reported seeing unusual planes during the war and even as late as 2015 in Derbyshire people have spotted Second World War planes crossing the sky - often silently, when planes of that era made a deafening roar. The Dominican Hill Retreat in the Philippines became the headquarters of a Japanese army unit who committed horrific crimes within its walls. It is perhaps unsurprising that it has gained a reputation for paranormal activity.

The 20th century has seen the application of science to the study of ghosts as never before. Spirit photography had begun in the Victorian era and allowed ghosts to be seen by many more people than ever before. Ectoplasm spooling out of mediums' mouths as they communicated with the dead became popular images of spiritualism. Even as some cases were unmasked as frauds, more sophisticated methods of capturing ghosts were developing.

Sound recordings allowed ghosts a new way to manifest. By simply running a tape recorder while speaking to a ghost, some believe that a ghost can imprint its answers onto the tape, becoming audible. Electronic Voice Phenomena, as these are known, are often hard to interpret but are held by some to be convincing evidence. From tape recorders to infrared cameras and electronic field sensors, the kit of the modern 'ghost hunter' is more complex than ever.

The 21st century seems to show no lessening in the fascination with ghosts. Television shows where ghost-hunters try to track down


The Nine-Ten Corporation presents
IS CONAN DOYLE RIGHT?
Can the Dead Talk to the Living?
See this Spiritualistic Sensation!
by Cullom Holmes Ferrell
Directed by John Joseph Harvey
Pathé Distributors
Have you ever seen a spirit?
Have you ever sat in the circle of "black magic"?
Can spirits write on slates and foretell your future?
Yes, I loved George!
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN U.S.A.
WYANDAK N.Y.C.

Modern media like films have allowed ghosts and ghostly images to reach a far wider audience than ever before

Image source: Getty Images

supernatural activity remain perennially popular. The fact that everyone with a mobile phone carries a high definition camera in their pocket has not brought about a surge of ghostly photographs. Today, if ghosts are seen at all in pictures, it tends to be as glowing orbs that sceptics say are nothing other than flashes reflected off motes of dust. It has also never been easier for an image to be faked using computer programs that are easy to use and ubiquitous. The camera may never lie, but people with editing software do. With all this possible fakery, it is no surprise that many ghost encounters today are reported as the feeling of presences around a person.

Perhaps the greatest surprise for those who study ghostlore is the level of commodification that ghosts have undergone in the 20th and 21st centuries. While earlier tales of ghosts were mostly of the scary sort, a modern ghost story can be anything from comical to romantic. The 1990 film *Ghost* introduced the public at large to the notion of pottery throwing, loving spooks. *Casper the Friendly Ghost* had already turned the ghost into a child-friendly figure. Dead celebrities may reappear after their deaths as reanimated images. Dead singers can strut and perform on stage as holographic ghosts.

Scientists have tried to impress on the public the irrationality of belief in ghosts, as have professional debunkers like James Randy, seemingly to little avail.

A 2018 poll in the United States found 60 per cent of those sampled thought that they had seen a ghost. No amount of explanations involving neurobiology or ideas of resonating low frequency sounds will convince a person that they have not seen a ghost. Though it is easy to laugh at those in the past who so readily believed in spectres and ghouls, it is obvious that humanity is just not ready to give up the ghost quite yet.

Spirit photography in the early 20th century seemed to offer positive proof of the existence of ghosts - until several famous hoaxes were discovered

THE OUIJA BOARD

It started as a game, but has been terrifying generations of teenagers ever since

One of the most recognisable ways of contacting the dead must be the Ouija board. Introduced to the public in 1891 as "The Wonderful Talking Board", the Ouija board was originally viewed as a simple parlour game offering "never-failing amusement and recreation for all classes."

The first advertisement hinted at its later role in spiritualism, describing it as "apparently forming the link which unites the known from the unknown, the material with the immaterial."

The Ouija board is simply a flat board printed with the alphabet, numbers from 0-9, 'Yes', 'No', and 'Goodbye'. The action comes from participants placing a finger loosely on a moveable, heart-shaped piece called the planchette. Questions are asked to the board and by the moving of the planchette, answers can be revealed.

The effects can be uncanny. No one person may be directing the movement of the planchette, yet it can seem to race across the board. The scientifically minded have suggested that the movement can be explained by ideomotor response - unconscious movements. Indeed the original sellers of the Ouija board offered no explanation for its action. Only in the First World War and the 1920s was the Ouija board turned into a method of communicating with the dead.

YES
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
АБВГДЕЁЖЗИЙКЛМН

Since first put on sale in 1891 the Ouija board has sold millions of copies around the world to users who seek for mysterious answers

Image source: Getty

GHOST FESTIVALS AROUND THE WORLD

All over the world, ghost festivals are a common and often ancient practise. They are held to venerate, celebrate and remember the dead

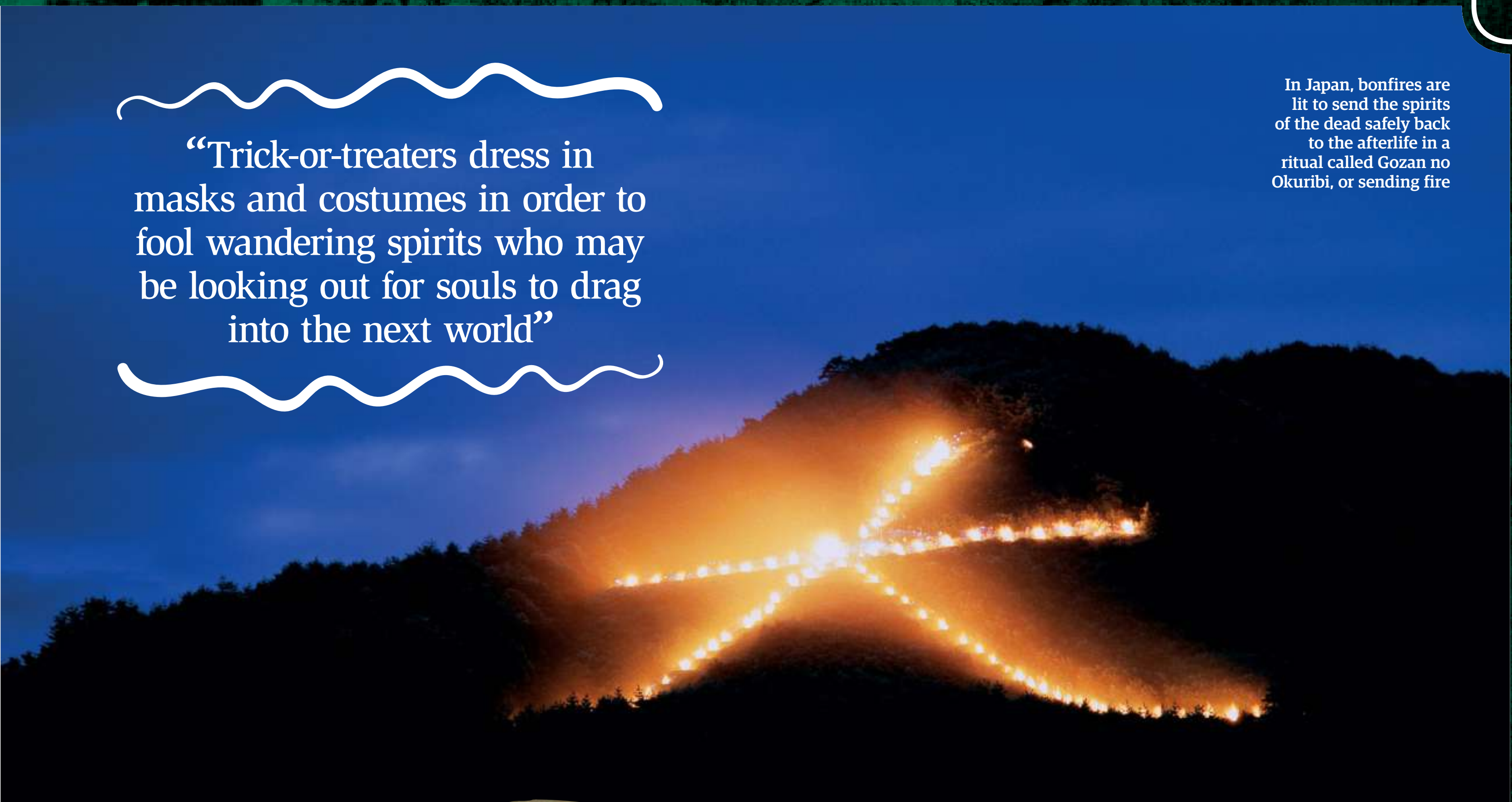
Written by Catherine Curzon

In cultures across the globe, festivals that honour the dead are common. Though each has its unique elements, there are also plenty of similarities, chief among them a wish to appease and honour the spirits of the departed, ensuring that they look on the living with benevolence.

Some of these celebrations, such as the hugely popular and commercial Halloween, last for just one or two days. Others, including the Chinese Hungry Ghost Festival, can be as long as a month. Perhaps surprisingly, the majority of ghost festivals aren't mournful affairs but celebrations, typified by the Day of the Dead feasts, and the social atmosphere of Thursday of the Dead, not to mention the gifts that are handed out to trick-or-treaters.

While gifts are sometimes exchanged by the living, the dead don't miss out. Different cultures share the tradition of leaving offerings of food, small items or even money to appease the spirits. It's also traditional to tend gravesites as a mark of respect, or decorate them with bright altars and flowers. In Japan, for example, each July people travel to their ancestral villages to celebrate Bon, and honour the memory of their ancestors with a trip to their grave and a ritual fire to see them safely to the afterlife.

Another common element of ghost festivals is a need to guide the wandering dead to their



> “Trick-or-treaters dress in masks and costumes in order to fool wandering spirits who may be looking out for souls to drag into the next world”

In Japan, bonfires are lit to send the spirits of the dead safely back to the afterlife in a ritual called Gozan no Okuribi, or sending fire

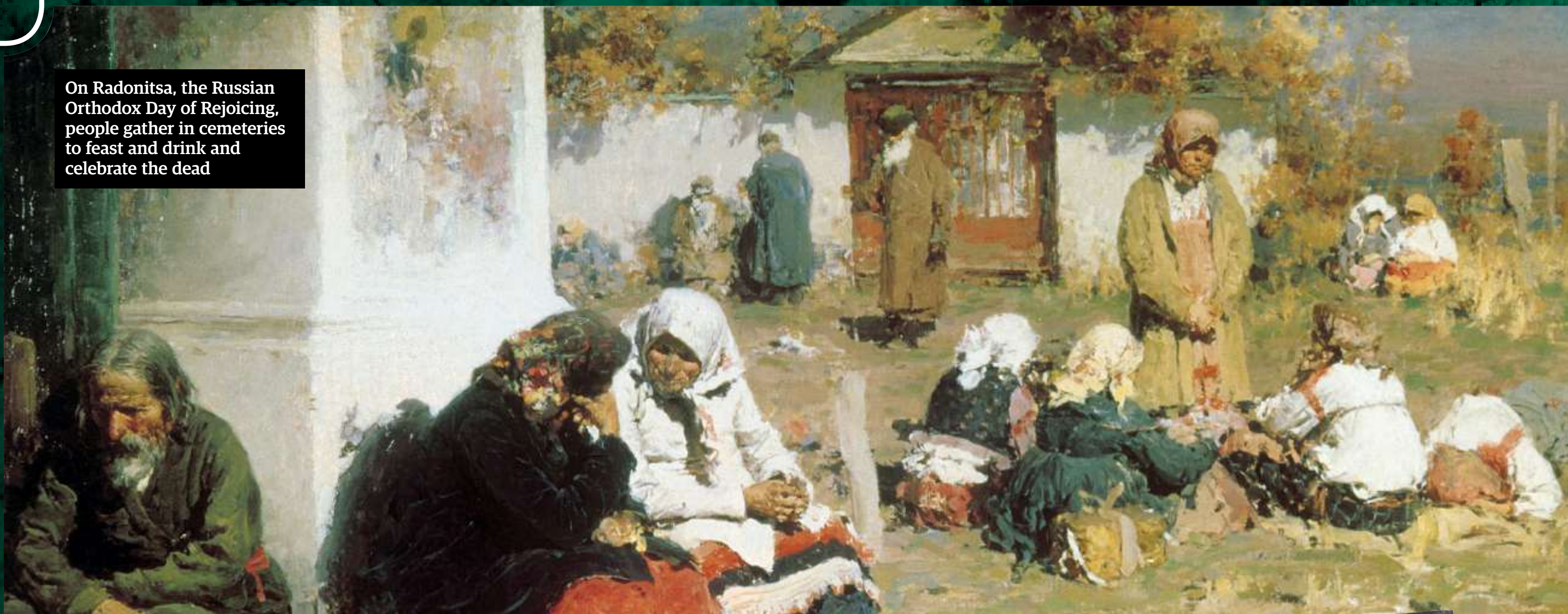
Image source: Getty Images

Left: Throughout history since pagan times, Jack O'Lanterns have traditionally been used to scare away evil spirits and light the darkness for the living

rest. This is why the Chinese send lanterns down rivers and in Nepal, live cows or children in cow costumes process through the streets for Gai Jatra, in the belief that spirits will catch the cow's tail and follow it into the next world.

In the west, meanwhile, trick-or-treaters dress in masks and costumes in order to fool wandering spirits who may be looking out for souls to drag into the next world. Paper lanterns, candles and Jack O'Lanterns are lit at ghost festivals in all corners of the globe, both to ward off evil spirits and to light the way to rest for wandering souls.

Regardless of where in the world the ghost festival is taking place, some things are always the same. The celebrations are as respectful as they are fun and hark back to ancient traditions. Whether in China, Nepal, Russia or the United States, ghost festivals are intended not just to honour the dead, but to unite the living in celebration and commemoration.



On Radonitsa, the Russian Orthodox Day of Rejoicing, people gather in cemeteries to feast and drink and celebrate the dead

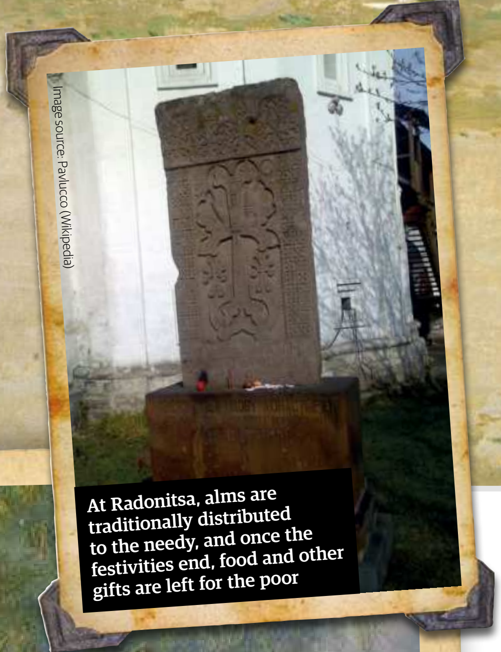
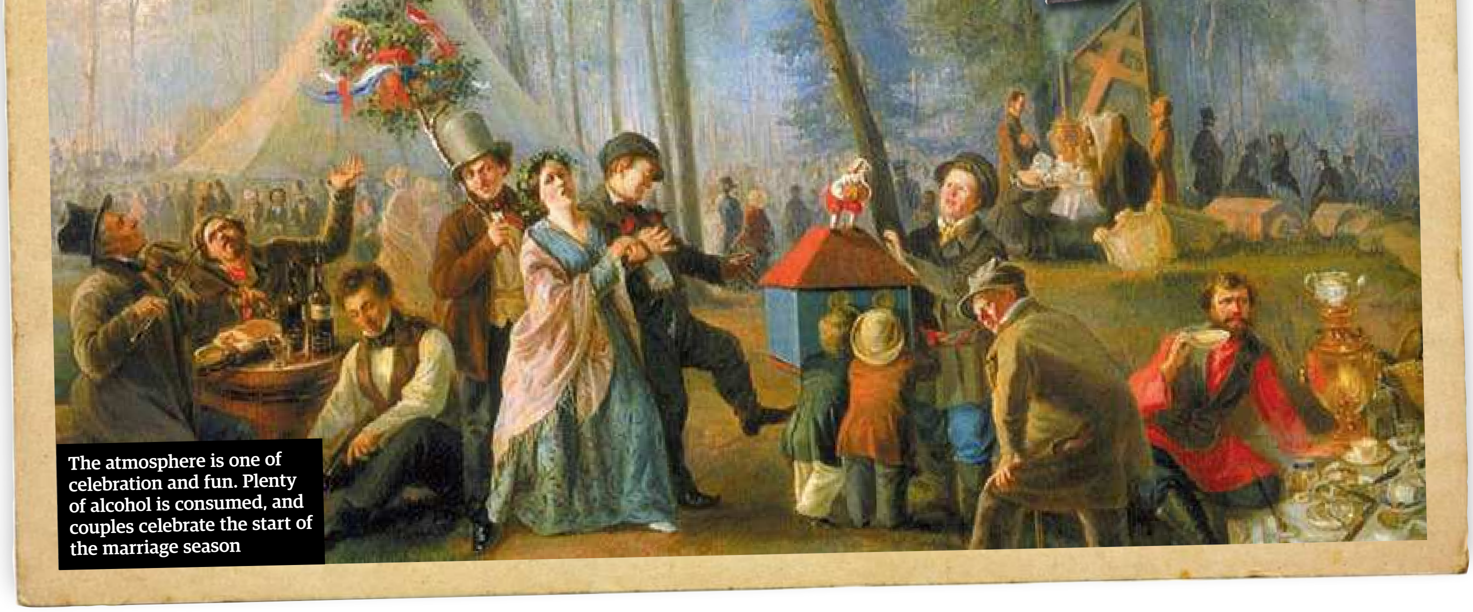


Image source: Pavlucco (Wikipedia)

At Radonitsa, alms are traditionally distributed to the needy, and once the festivities end, food and other gifts are left for the poor



The atmosphere is one of celebration and fun. Plenty of alcohol is consumed, and couples celebrate the start of the marriage season

RADONITSA: THE DAY OF REJOICING

On Radonitsa, or the Day of Rejoicing, Orthodox Russians commemorate those who have passed away with food, gifts and ceremony

Written by Catherine Curzon

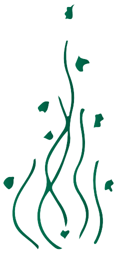
Radonitsa is a Russian Orthodox commemoration of the dead that falls, depending on the particular country in which it's being celebrated, on the second Monday or Tuesday of Pascha, or Easter. The feast was moved to the Tuesday in some areas so priests, who were observing Easter fasts on the Monday, could still participate. In the pre-Christian era, families visited the resting places of their departed ancestors and held celebratory feasts at the gravesides. Once people converted to Christianity, this tradition continued within the Russian Orthodox Church as Radonitsa, the Day of Rejoicing, in which celebrations are held not only for the dead, but to mark the resurrection of Jesus.

As the young dance and celebrate the coming of spring in Russian Orthodox graveyards and cemeteries, the festival begins. Mothers and wives who have lost children and husbands join children who have lost their parents to perform ritual lamentations. Once these are concluded, food from Paschal feasts are brought to the gravesides, and families gather together to enjoy the banquet. Koliva, a dish of boiled wheat, is traditionally served to honour the dead in the belief that the wheat represents those who have died but may yet be resurrected, just as a grain of wheat grows from the soil. A mixture of mead and honey is poured over the grave as an offering to those who rest there, and the atmosphere is one of great revelry, with alcohol consumed in generous amounts.

The focus of Radonitsa isn't on mourning, but on resurrection and hope. Once the feast is concluded, the remains are left at the graves for the poor, while celebrants return home to leave more food on the table overnight in case some spirits are still hungry. Also common during Radonitsa is the tradition of married people giving gifts to their in-laws in the belief that this will spread joy through every household for the year ahead.

> In some areas, Radonitsa is held on the Tuesday following Easter Monday, so that priests can join in with the feasts and festivities

Radonitsa also marks the start of the marriage season. With weddings forbidden during Pascha, it is the first opportunity since Lent for marriages to take place, which further adds to the spirit of fun and hope. A common sight during Radonitsa are Easter eggs, which are placed on tombs and graves as symbols of resurrection, and hymns are sung too as people process through graveyards before alms are handed to the poor. In this feasting and festivity, the joy of the first resurrection is recreated and celebrated once more.



THURSDAY OF THE DEAD

On Thursday of the Dead, Arab Christians and Muslims alike share a feast to honour the souls of the departed

Written by Catherine Curzon

Thursday of the Dead goes by many names. Variously known as Khamis al-Amwat, Thursday of the Secrets or even Thursday of the Eggs, it is a feast day shared by Christians and Muslims in the Levant. Although the date of the feast changes annually, it always falls on the Thursday between the respective Easter Sundays of the Eastern Orthodox Christian and Catholic churches.

On Thursday of the Dead, the souls of the departed are honoured by their living descendants, and this is a feast day that has become uniquely associated with women. Just before sunrise, women gather at the tombs of their ancestors to pray and share ka'ak al-asfar. This seeded or decorated bread cake is popular in the region, and is known as the yellow roll. Once their prayers are finished, the celebrants distribute gifts of dried fruit and ka'ak al-asfar to their families and the poor alike. Children are given ka'ak al-asfar, as well as sweet treats and decorative eggs that have been painted yellow. Observers of Thursday of the Dead have noted that the day serves as much as a celebration and social event for the women concerned as a chance to commemorate the dead.

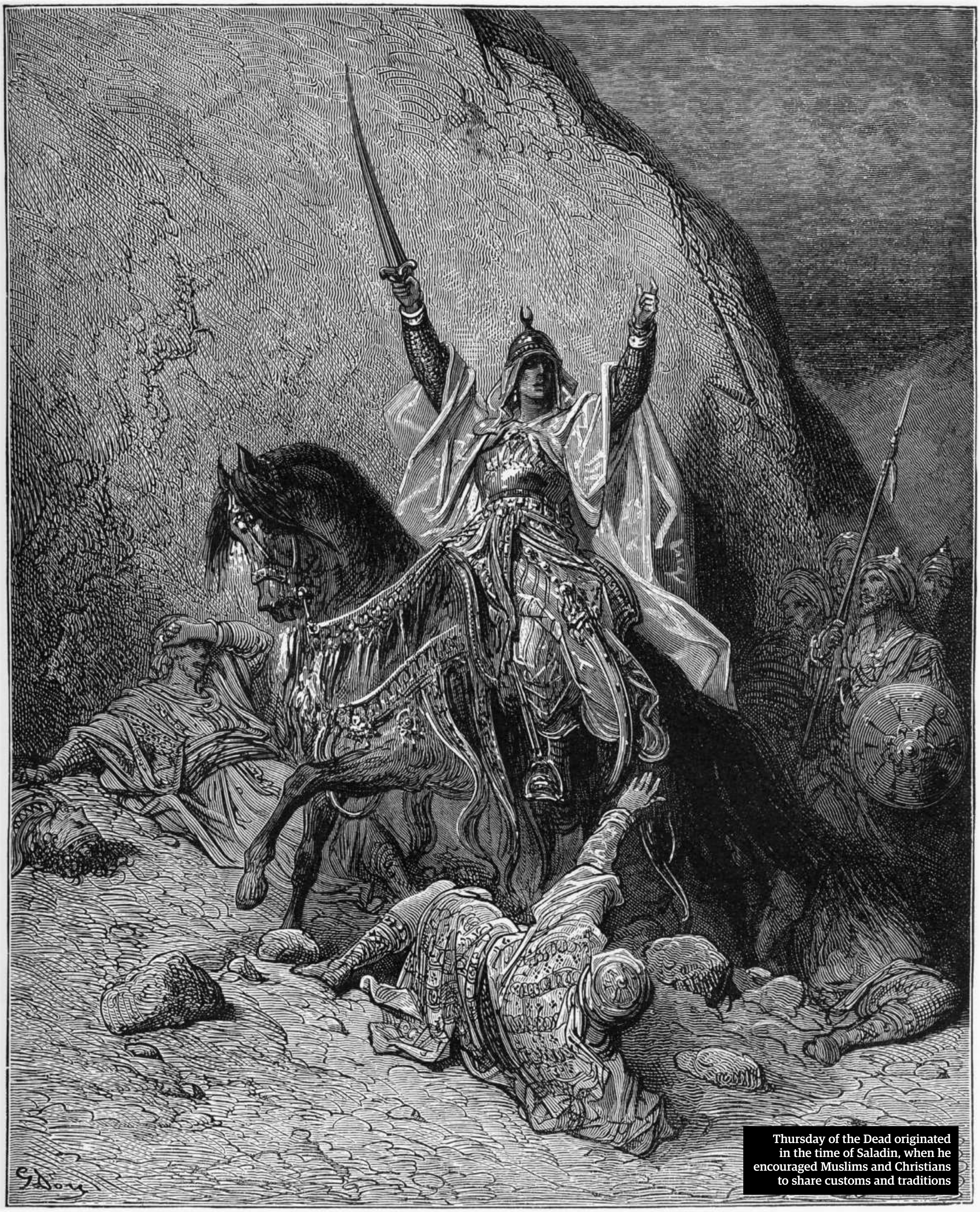
The tradition has been shared between Muslims and Christians since the 12th century, when Saladin encouraged the adoption of Christian customs in traditionally Muslim regions, hoping that it would lead to increased religious tolerance and understanding. The fact that mixed faiths share the feast day is intended to reflect the belief that those who have passed into the next world share a single, integrated society. Other death traditions are also connected to Thursday of the Dead, as Muslims in mourning visit the tomb of a newly dead loved one to share traditional foods every Thursday following the death until the following Easter. After this, they are marked by the annual Thursday of the Dead celebrations.

In the 21st century, this practice of weekly visits has become less frequent, though ka'ak al-asfar is still distributed according to the tradition on the Thursday and Monday following a death, as well as during Easter.

Though it is known by a number of names across the region, in the Syrian city of Homs, Thursday of the Dead is widely known as Thursday of Sweetness, referring not only to the sweets distributed by women to children, but also buying or making them beforehand.

Image source: Nsaum75 (Wikipedia)

Ka'ak al-asfar, the yellow roll, is a bread that is traditionally shared by those who recognise Thursday of the Dead



Thursday of the Dead originated in the time of Saladin, when he encouraged Muslims and Christians to share customs and traditions

Image source: Getty Images

During the Hungry Ghost Festival, illuminated lanterns are floated down rivers to lure unwelcome or malevolent ghosts away from the living

Image source: Getty Images

大士台
座上蓮花共仰慈雲沾德澤
瓶中楊柳灑東法雨祝昇平

Effigies and altars are built to appease the wandering spirits, and piled high with offerings of food and small gifts

Image source: Chong Fat (Wikipedia)

THE HUNGRY GHOST FESTIVAL

At the Buddhist Hungry Ghost Festival, spirits receive offerings intended to send them back to the afterlife without harming the living

Written by Catherine Curzon

The Hungry Ghost Festival is a traditional East Asian celebration that is held by Buddhists and Taoists on the 14th or 15th of the seventh month, according to the Chinese calendar.

This is traditionally known as the Ghost Month, while the day on which the festival is celebrated is known as Ghost Day, and festivities fill the month. On Ghost Day, it's believed that the entrances to the realms of heaven and hell are thrown open, sending spirits into the world of the living. As damned souls swarm out in search of mayhem on Earth, celebrants perform rituals that are intended to appease them and send them back to where they came from. Central to the festival is the veneration of the dead, when the living seek to appease the spirits of those who might otherwise cause them harm.

They prepare impressive feasts and burn fake money and other offerings, which they believe will then become available in the afterlife, making the souls' eternities a little easier. Lanterns and candles are lit in the streets, which are intended to guide the spirits back to their own realm.

Feasting is an important part of the festival, and food is also left outside so passing ghosts can eat at leisure should they wish. It's frowned upon to clear away offerings from the streets during the festival, while people refrain from activities such as swimming in case a spirit drowns them. Marriages held during Ghost Month are believed to be destined to fail.

At dusk on Ghost Day, photographs of the dead are put out on traditional family tablets alongside plates of specially prepared foods. Their descendants then light incense and bow before the offerings, seeking blessing from their ancestors. The day closes with a feast, at which one seat is left empty so the dead can join their family and dine with them.

On the last day of the month, the gates of hell are closed and barred again, trapping the restless and unredeemed souls inside for another year. Celebrations are held in which more offerings are burned for those in hell, so they will have money and goods in the afterlife. Monks perform chants to banish any stubborn ghosts while families gather beside at rivers to paint their ancestors' names onto lanterns that they then float away on the current.

This beautiful ritual, they believe, will draw the ghosts whose names are written on the lanterns to follow the tiny lights downriver and away from their living families, ensuring peace for another year.

SAMHAIN

Halloween may have largely replaced it, but Samhain is still one of the most important festivals in the Pagan year

Written by Ben Gazur

Samhain, falling on 31 October, is the last of the three harvest festivals celebrated by modern-day Pagans. It also marks the true beginning of winter and was seen as a day of the dead. Several Neolithic tombs were constructed in such a way that the light of sunrise on Samhain would illuminate the interior. The Christian Allhallowtide held on the same day may preserve this association with the older feast, as its ringing of church bells is thought to provide comfort to the departed.

Image source: Getty

Fire and mummery has long been a part of celebrating Samhain; early pagans dressed as animals and spirits

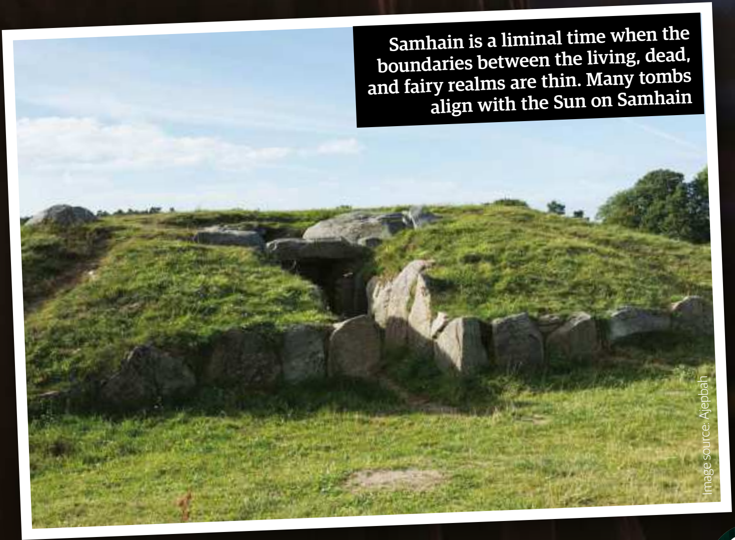
> The boundaries between the human world and those of the fairies and the dead are thought to grow thin and permeable at Samhain

The early descriptions of Samhain in Irish literature show it as a time to end farming and warfare and to gather families and tribes together to survive the winter. In the cold nights there was much drinking and tale-telling to pass the time. It was a time of potential danger, as the fairies would open their mounds and it was possible for the dead to return from the spirit realm. Samhain was the time when cattle and other livestock were slaughtered and preserved for winter and it may have been a time that was associated with sacrifices. On Samhain the fire in the hearth was allowed to burn out while people worked in the fields. That night bonfires were lit to ward off evil and fire was taken from these to relight the home fires. The smoke from the great fires was thought to be protective. Sometimes two fires were lit and villagers and livestock would pass between them. Today bonfires are still lit at Samhain. Major cities such as Edinburgh see large processions of people carrying flaming torches alongside drums and music. Traditionally the festivities of Samhain could be accompanied by dressing up and disguise. Boys would sometimes go from house to house to beg wood to be added to the communal fire. To light the way revellers carved lanterns from turnips and wurzels. It is easy to see how Samhain influenced the later traditions of Halloween, which many people celebrate today. For modern Pagans, Samhain is both a time to remember the dead and to celebrate. Feasts are often held as a way of offering hospitality to the deceased.

You may want to bake a batch of soul cakes to offer to the poor. It is also a time to introduce newborns to the community. Samhain can be the proper moment to reflect on things that have ended in the past year, as well as the hopes for what may come in the next.

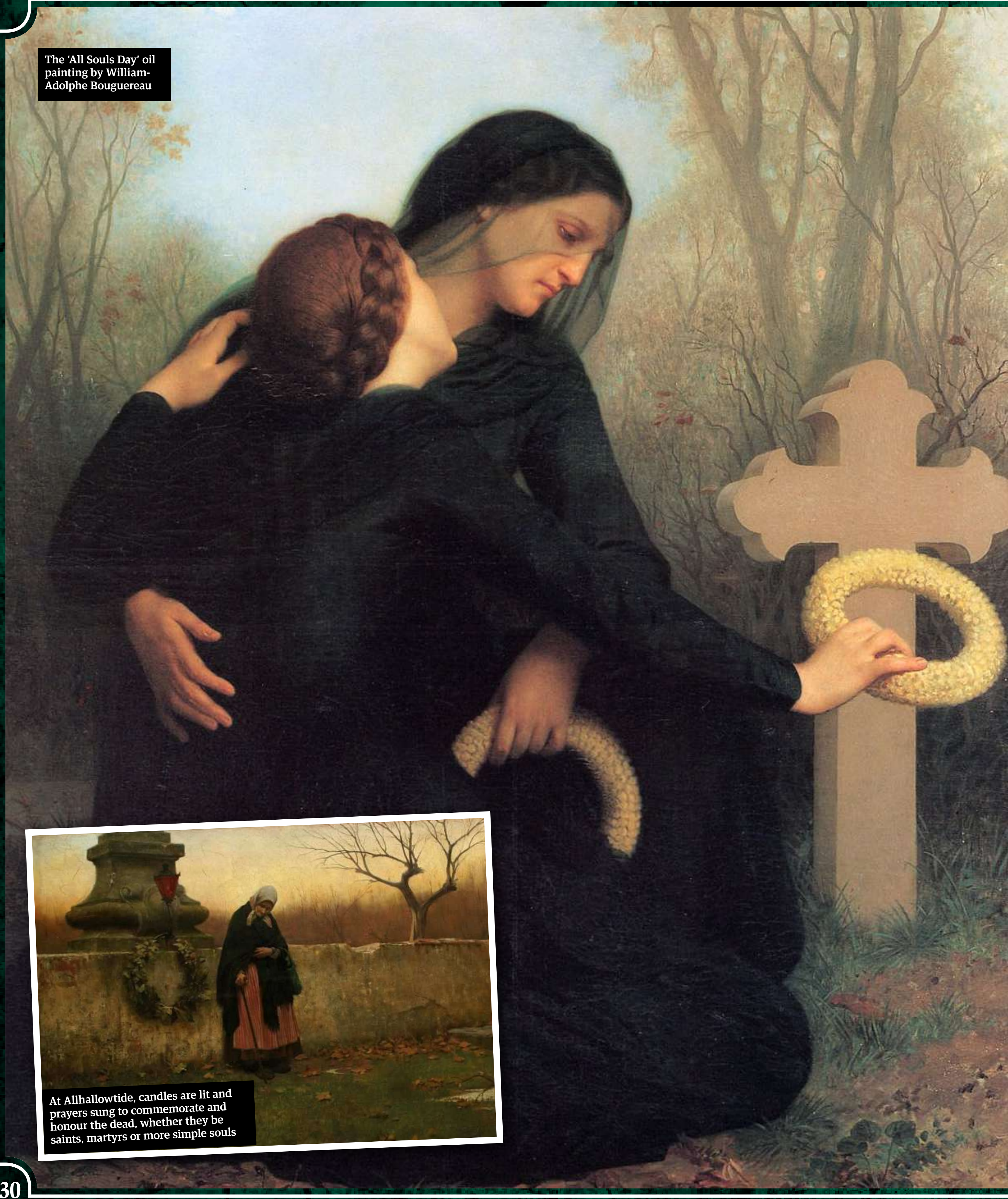
Samhain brings Pagans together to celebrate life and death as they remember those who have passed on

Image source: Getty



Samhain is a liminal time when the boundaries between the living, dead, and fairy realms are thin. Many tombs align with the Sun on Samhain

Image source: Alamy



The 'All Souls Day' oil painting by William-Adolphe Bouguereau

At Allhallowtide, candles are lit and prayers sung to commemorate and honour the dead, whether they be saints, martyrs or more simple souls

THE THREE DAYS OF ALLHALLOWTIDE

Though Halloween is one of the most famous and widely celebrated holidays, it's actually part of a three-day celebration known as Allhallowtide

Written by Catherine Curzon

There can be few people in the west who haven't heard of Halloween. It's one of the world's most famed festivals, and is widely celebrated across continents. What they may not all realise, however, is that it's part of a three-day celebration in the Western Christian tradition. The triduum of Allhallowtide marks All Saints' Eve (better known as Halloween), All Saints' Day (All Hallows' Day) and All Souls' Day. It begins, of course, on 31 October, and continues until 2 November. Like the Day of the Dead, it is a three-day period in which the deceased are remembered, including saints, martyrs, and other religious figures, and can be traced back for centuries.

The first whispers of what became Hallowtide can be found as far back as the 8th century, and festivals to commemorate the dead are long-standing traditions all over the globe. The word 'Allhallowtide' was first used in the 15th century, but eight centuries before that, the church discovered that there were so many martyrs to venerate that the calendar couldn't accommodate them all, so they came up with the concept of All Saints' Day, on which all saints and martyrs would be commemorated. A vigil was held on the previous day, which soon became known as All Hallows' Eve. The inception of All Souls' Day began in the 9th century, and was an opportunity for prayers for all the dead, not just those who were venerated. Though these events were initially celebrated over eight days, they were eventually condensed into the three we know today.

The early Christian church had so many martyred saints to venerate that they couldn't all have their own feast day, so All Saints' Day was born

Some believe that All Hallows' Eve was celebrated in pagan harvest culture as Samhain, when the veil between the world and the afterlife grew thin and people took to donning masks and costumes to protect themselves from wandering souls. Today those costumes have become familiar as part of trick or treating and on Allhallowtide, so-called soulers – usually children or the poor – went from door to door praying and singing traditional songs in return for soul cakes, which were intended to offer comfort to souls in purgatory.

Though All Saints' Day is a day of celebration when candles are lit and prayers offered up, All Souls' Day is usually marked by more sombre celebrations. Bells are rung for the dead and candles are lit to guide lost souls to heaven and, the living hope, peaceful rest.

DAY OF THE DEAD

Mexico's iconic Day of the Dead, or Dia de Muertos, is renowned for its colourful and lively celebration of lost loved ones

Written by Catherine Curzon

The Day of the Dead is an annual, multi-day public holiday that is celebrated across Mexico and by people of Mexican heritage all across the world. Though it is intended to honour the dead, it's a far from mournful occasion, and is instead known for its colour and celebration. Family and friends gather to remember their deceased loved ones with lively parties, believing that the spirits of the dead return to celebrate with them during the days and nights of the festival.

The Day of the Dead has been celebrated in Mexico for centuries, and reflects the Mexican belief that death is simply one more part of the natural cycle that all humans must go through. Before the Spanish conquest of Mexico in the 16th century, the holiday was celebrated in early summer, but as the years passed, it shifted in the calendar to coincide with the Christian celebration of Allhallowtide, and is now marked for three days from 31st October to 2nd November. Although northern Mexico traditionally didn't celebrate the festival due to observing its own indigenous traditions, by the 20th century the Day of the Dead was a nationwide event.

On the three days in question, family and friends come together at the graves of their loved ones in the spirit of rejoicing. Here they construct brightly painted altars called ofrendas, which are decorated with sugar skulls – or calaveras – and specially written poems. They layer the altars with flowers including Mexican marigolds – traditionally the flowers of the dead – not to mention the deceased's favourite refreshments and treasured personal belongings. As the days draw on, the festival-goers share prayers and stories about the deceased in an atmosphere not of sadness, but joy, and the belief that laughter and happiness will encourage the souls of the dead to join the party. Though offerings of food are consumed by attendees, they believe that the spirits of the dead have already dined on the spiritual essence of the offerings, so the food no longer has any nutritional value for the living.

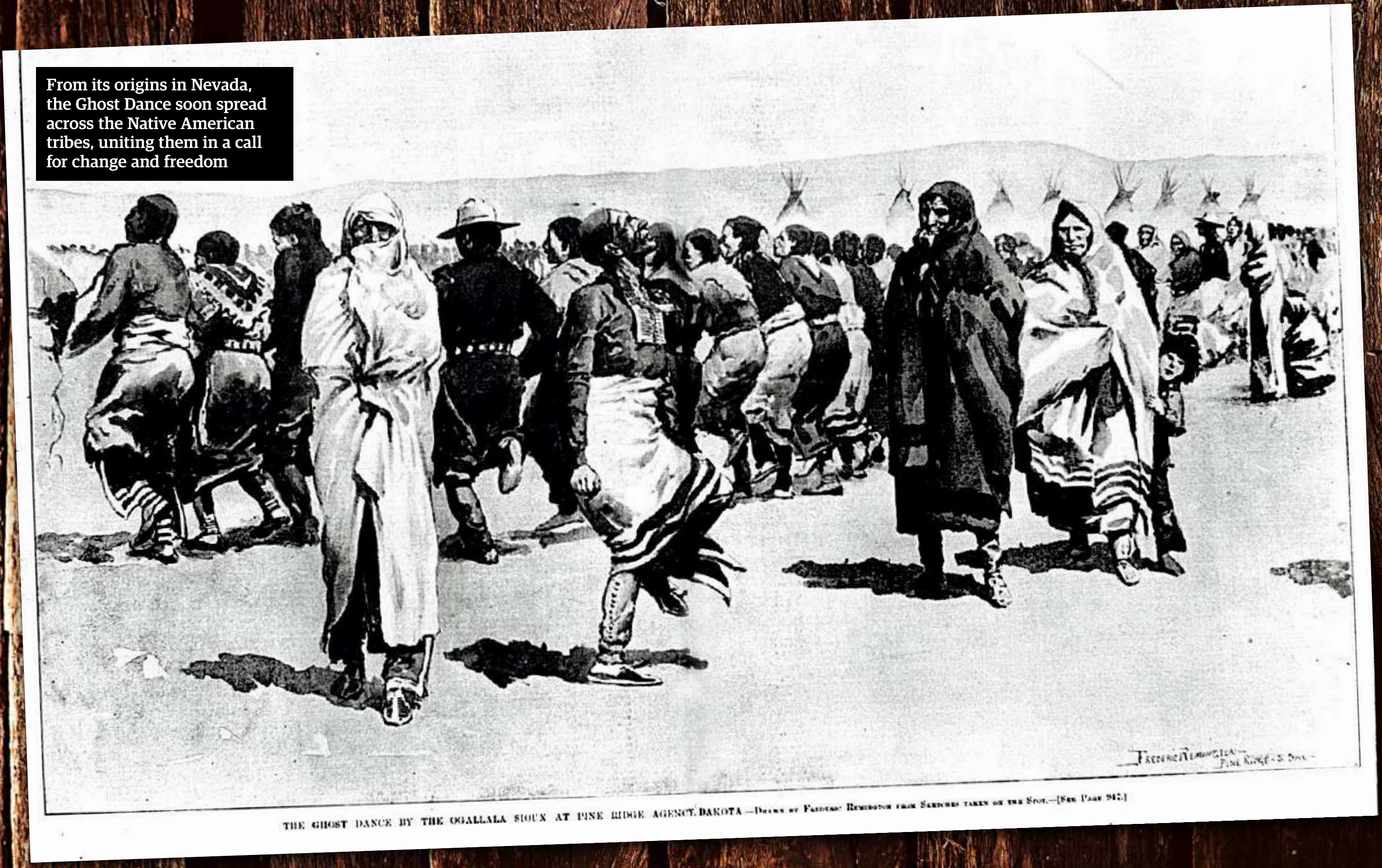
The origins of the Day of the Dead can be found in ancient festivals that date back more than 3,000 years, and most notably an Aztec festival that celebrated the goddess Mictēcacihuātl, the Lady of the Dead. Planning for the event is a serious business, and on the three days in question, many people spend the nights at the graves too, making the most of the chance to reconnect with their lost loved ones.

People of Mexican heritage come together to celebrate the Day of the Dead every year, creating decorative altars to honour their ancestors

Image source: Eneas de Troya (Wikipedia)

Sugar skulls, or calaveras, are a popular decorative touch on the Day of the Dead and are often adorned with the names of the departed

Image source: Fangusu (Wikipedia)



From its origins in Nevada, the Ghost Dance soon spread across the Native American tribes, uniting them in a call for change and freedom

Frederic Remington
Pine Ridge - S. Dak.

THE GHOST DANCE BY THE OGALLALA SIOUX AT PINE RIDGE AGENCY, DAKOTA.—Drawn by Frederic Remington from Sketches taken on the Spot.—[See Page 947.]

THE GHOST DANCE

When Native Americans performed the Ghost Dance, they believed that the ritual would summon the spirits of the dead for the good of all their people

Written by Catherine Curzon

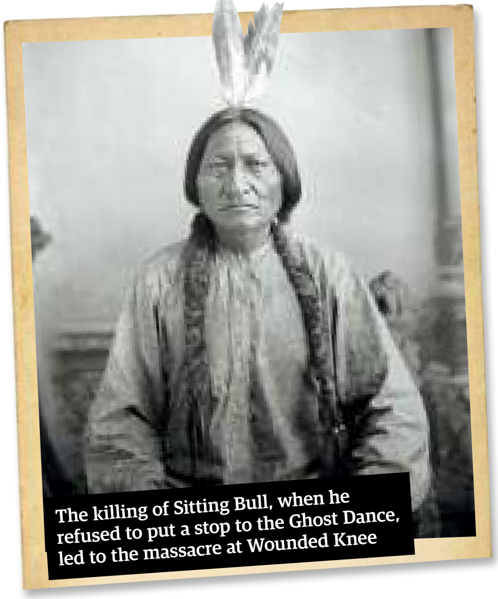
The Ghost Dance, or Natdia, entered Native American spiritual practices in 1890, when Native Americans were desperately in need of hope. They found it in Wovoka, the spiritual leader of the Northern Paiute people of Nevada. The Ghost Dance originated in Wovoka's dream of a new and bountiful Earth in which the Northern Palute lived in peace, ascending into the sky with their ancestors as the world was born. They reached this new world by performing a traditional circle dance during which they entered a state of religious ecstasy and were able to summon the spirits of their ancient ancestors. The dance banished white settlers and brought harmony to the Native Americans.

Wovoka believed that he was the messiah and that he had a duty to ready his people for their salvation. Central to this was the retreat of white settlers and the peaceful collaboration of different tribes to create a moral and prosperous society. Soon the Ghost Dance spread outside of Nevada, becoming part of Native American ritual across the country. Each tribe added its own subtle elements, but common to all was the belief that the dance would call the spirits of the dead to their aid and create a new Earth for them to enjoy, which would be reborn before their eyes as they danced in the air with the spirits.

Wovoka was the acknowledged expert in the movement and people travelled across the country to Nevada to hear his teachings. Under his guidance they learned that they should share a feast and dance in circles for four days and nights. On the fifth day, the dancers bathed before returning to their homes until, six weeks later, they repeated the ritual.

When word of the popularity of the Ghost Dance reached the Bureau of Indian Affairs, agents believed that its central promise that white settlers would be banished from Native American lands could be interpreted as a call to arms. The fact that the dancers believed that the ritual provided their shirts with bulletproof properties seemed like further proof of this. When the Lakota people joined the movement, the BIA detained their chief, Sitting Bull, and ordered him to stop the dance. In the ensuing confrontation Sitting Bull was killed. His death led to the Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890, when US soldiers fired upon the Lakota people, killing and injuring hundreds.

The massacre marked the end of the movement's popularity. Wovoka continued as a shaman, but the new world of peace and prosperity that he longed for was not to be.



The killing of Sitting Bull, when he refused to put a stop to the Ghost Dance, led to the massacre at Wounded Knee

SÉANCES

Séances are widely seen as showmanship and hoaxes by many, but the origins of the practice are rooted in religion. Enter Spiritualism…

Written by Poppy-Jay Palmer

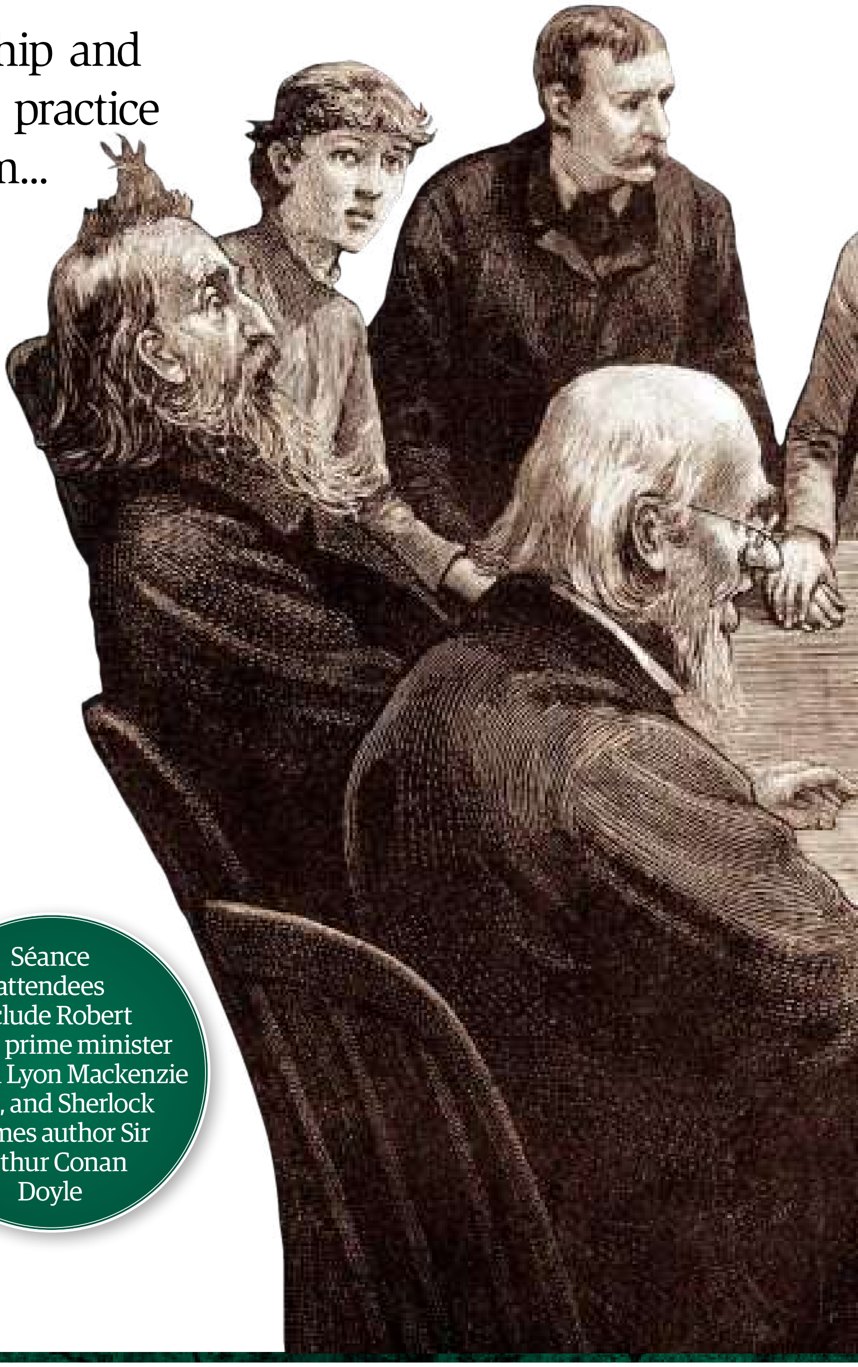
> “Séances can be traced back to the 3rd century, and even then they were closely related to occult practices and feared by non-believers”

The word ‘séance’ comes directly from the French ‘séance’, meaning ‘seat’ and ‘session’, from the Old French ‘seoir’, meaning ‘to sit’. So if you are ever holding a séance and not all participants are sitting down, it’s technically not a séance!

Séances were, and are, used as a method of contacting the spirit world and talking to those who are no longer with us. Proper séances can be traced back to the 3rd century, and even back then they were closely related to occult practices and brought fear to the hearts of non-believers. However, it wasn’t until the 19th century that the popularity of séances began to balloon. That popularity came with the creation of the religion Spiritualism, with founding sisters Kate and Margaret Fox quickly becoming popular for holding public séances in New York with the aim of contacting the dead.

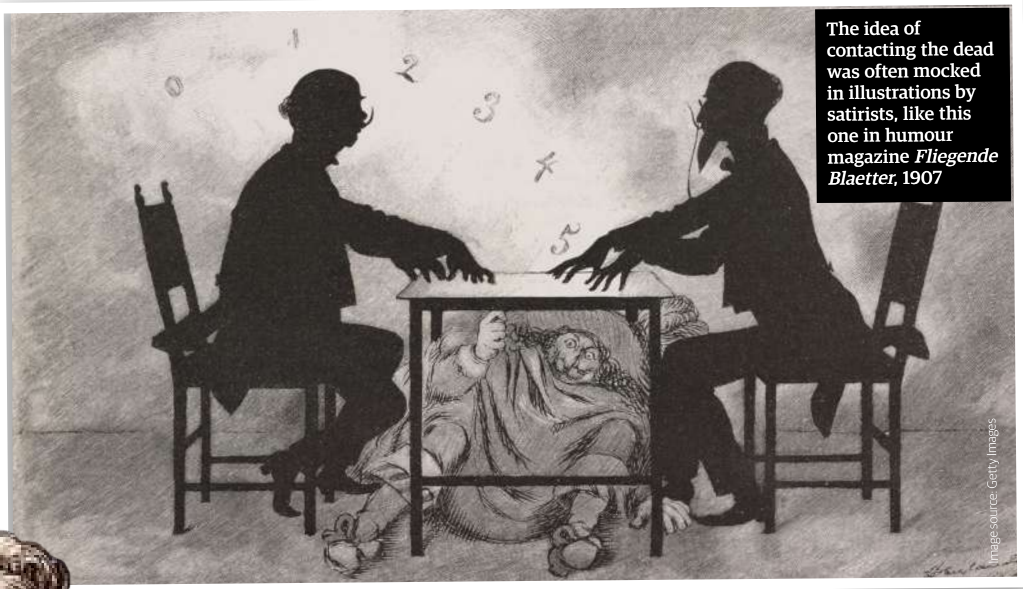
Over the years, five different types of séances have been developed: religious séances, which are used during services as a way of communicating with living personalities in the spirit world (Spiritualists like to refer to them as ‘receiving messages’), stage mediumship séances, which are held on stage in front of paying audiences; leader-assisted séances, where a small group usually gathered around a table is led by a medium conducting it, informal social séances, which involve neither a leader nor any kind of religious context, and Spiritualist séances, during which a medium connects with the spirit world and all present participants interact and speak with the personalities they believe they have summoned.

Some of the most famous séances of that particular era include those of First Lady Mary Todd Lincoln, who organised several sessions in the White House while grieving the loss of her son. They were extremely high profile, and were attended by her husband President Abraham Lincoln as well as a



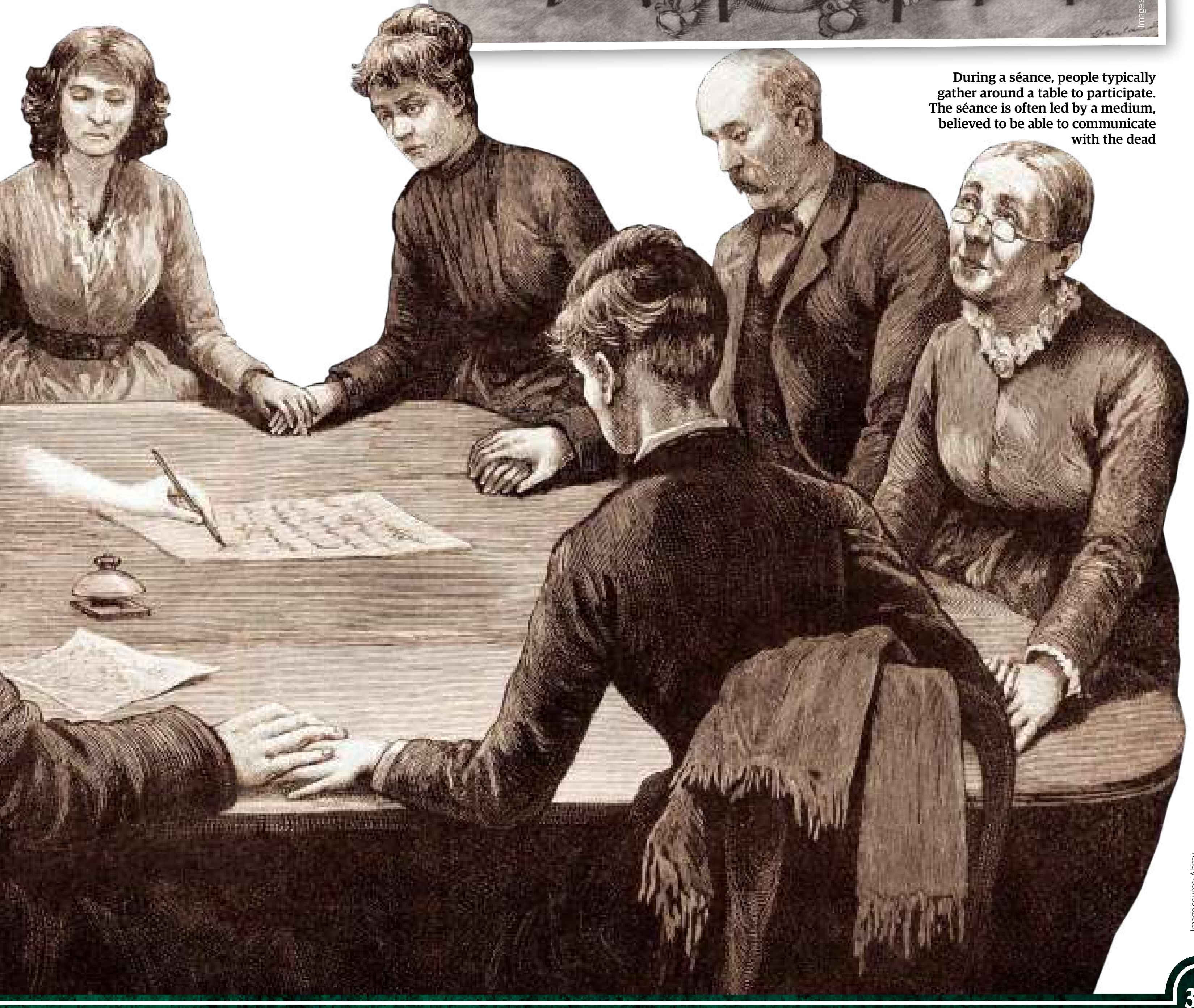
Séance attendees include Robert Owen, prime minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, and Sherlock Holmes author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle number of other prominent members of US high society.

Scientists, sceptics and atheists have always had more than their doubts. The art of the séance took a massive blow in 1887 with the Seybert Commission and its investigation into a number of respected Spiritualist mediums. Their report decried them as frauds and showmen. Outside of slumber parties, séances are still being used as part of the religious services of Spiritualists, Spiritist, and Espiritismo churches to this day, but they usually place more emphasis on the spiritual aspect than on the showmanship.



The idea of contacting the dead was often mocked in illustrations by satirists, like this one in humour magazine *Fliegende Blaetter*, 1907

Image source: Getty Images



During a séance, people typically gather around a table to participate. The séance is often led by a medium, believed to be able to communicate with the dead

Image source: Alamy

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In a technological world, 21st century paranormal investigators are turning to increasingly sophisticated methods in their search for proof of ghosts

Image source: Alamy

INVESTIGATING THE PARANORMAL

The paranormal has fascinated people for centuries, from bumps in the night to crackling EVPS. In the technological 21st century, ghost-hunting is more popular than ever

Written by Catherine Curzon

Whether it's paranormal investigators with vans full of expensive technology or old-fashioned ghost-hunters with little more than a torch, the search for ghosts is as popular as it has ever been. It's big business for some, with television and commercial ghost hunts making stars of investigators, whilst for others it's just a bit of fun. In their search for the truth, believers and sceptics alike employ everything from clairvoyance to the latest digital technology, with every discovery analysed to prove whether death is really the end.

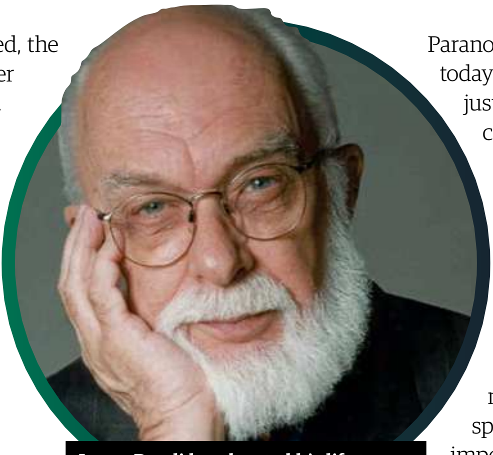
Though for most ghost-hunters the supernatural is nothing but a hobby, others have made it their career. When it comes to these professional investigators, Britain's most famous is undoubtedly Harry Price. As a member of the Society for Psychical Research, founder of the rival National Laboratory of Psychical Research and the figurehead of the Ghost Club, Price's paranormal career spanned the first half of the 20th century. His investigations were a far cry from the excitable scenes we see on paranormal TV shows, and though Price believed in the supernatural, he did so whilst exposing fraudulent mediums, fake ectoplasmic photographs, and hoax hauntings.

Price's most famous investigation was undertaken at Essex's notorious Borley Rectory, reputed before it was destroyed by fire to be the most haunted place in Britain. Borley was Price's pet project and his books on the subject did much to build the legend that sprang up around the rectory. Though many of his findings were discredited by the Society of Psychical Research and have been further debunked by modern researchers, it made Price's name in the public eye. Whenever there were ghosts to be investigated, Price was on the scene and newspapers were quick to quote his take on supernatural scoops.

In America, meanwhile, husband and wife team Ed and Lorraine Warren were chalking up hit after hit as they pursued not only ghosts, but demons too. Among the 10,000 cases that the Warrens claimed to have examined was the infamous Amityville haunting, which became a Hollywood phenomenon, and the couple even went on the record to claim that a prisoner convicted of manslaughter had been acting under demonic influence when the crime was committed. They didn't secure his freedom, but the case did nothing to harm the Warrens' celebrity. Their names are familiar to a whole new generation thanks to the *Conjuring* film series, in which the Warrens take on everything from the supposedly true story of the Enfield Poltergeist to a fictional demon nun. Though the

Warrens are both deceased, the films based on their career show no sign of stopping.

Of course, where there are believers, there are sceptics too. One of the most famous and tenacious is undoubtedly James Randi, founder of the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry, which is devoted to proving that the paranormal is nothing but fiction. From orbs to séances and everything in between, these headline-grabbing sceptics analyse and interrogate paranormal evidence using rigorous scientific methods. For more than 50 years Randi offered $1 million to anyone who could demonstrate paranormal phenomena in laboratory conditions. In the half century that the challenge was open, and despite more than a thousand candidates coming forward, nobody ever won the prize.



James Randi has devoted his life to disproving the paranormal. He even offered a million dollars to anyone who could provide proof

Image source: Via Wikipedia - James Randi Educational Foundation

Paranormal investigations today use modern technology, just as their forebears called on table-tapping to make contact. There are even companies devoted to supplying technological investigation tools including video cameras, digital thermometers to monitor temperature spikes, and the all-important EMF meters. Some investigators claim that spirits cause fluctuations in the electromagnetic field at a haunted location, and they watch the digital meters for anomalies closely. Sceptics and investigators alike admit that fluctuations can be caused by any number of other things including mobile phones and radio signals, but to some ghost-hunters, they provide positive proof of a nearby phantom. For those who'd like to hear voices from the other world, there are a couple of technological options. One is the spirit box, a device that scans through AM and FM frequencies, supposedly allowing the dead to communicate through the static. Of course, radio stations often broadcast spoken word, leaving the voices picked up on spirit boxes open to question.

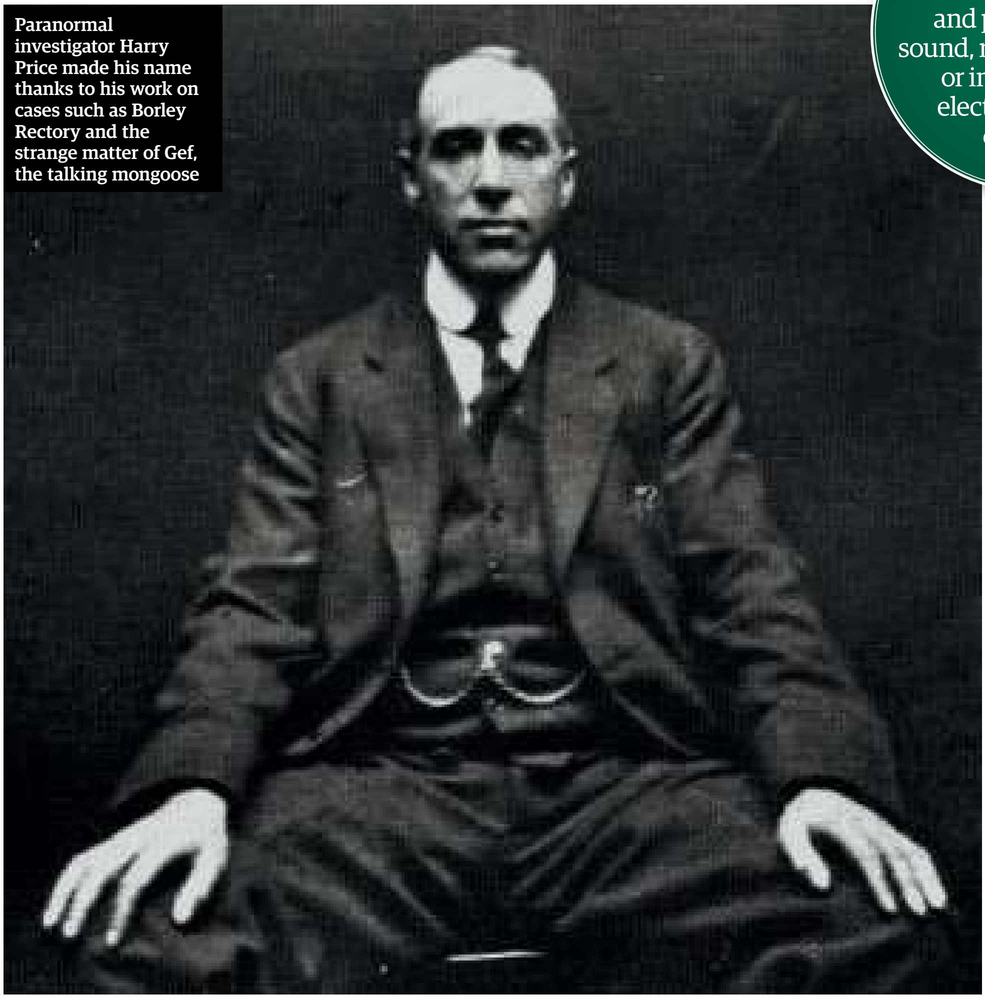
More words from the other side are sought in Electronic Voice Phenomena, better known as EVPs. These are recordings in which an investigator will ask questions aloud, leaving pauses for a reply. They are then played back and the audio combed for any hidden responses, that may be buried deep in the apparent silence.

EVPs gained popularity in the 1950s thanks to Friedrich Jürgenson, who claimed to have captured the voices of deceased family members when recording birdsong. In the 1970s Latvian intellectual Konstantin Raudive claimed that his own recordings, many of which sounded like gibberish, were the voices of the dead. He explained away the gibberish by claiming that spirits would change languages in the middle of a sentence or even speak backwards, mispronouncing and garbling words in their efforts to communicate. His critics weren't convinced and questioned why historical figures such as Hitler suddenly spoke Latvian, when they hadn't in life. Raudive answered that spirits were capable of identity theft too, adopting famous names to stand out from the pack.

Ghost-hunting methods can include recording and playing back sound, replaying CCTV, or investigating electromagnetic oddities

Much of the technological search for ghosts takes place in a world of static, where seemingly random patterns and sounds are analysed in the hope that they hide something valuable, whether that's a cold spot that never warms up, a spike on the EMF meter that appears to move in response to an investigator's requests, or white noise that can be mixed until audible words emerge. Yet technology is prone to failure and manipulation, and humans are given to wish fulfilment, so desperate to obtain proof of the paranormal that they misinterpret inconsequential coincidences. There is also the possibility of dishonesty, and investigators hoping to make their name have been accused of deliberate fakery, particularly when it comes to paranormal television

The holy grail for psychic investigators is, of course, a genuine photograph of a phantom. Since William H Mumler created a hoax spirit photo in the 19th century, investigators have striven to capture the real thing. They have succeeded in photographing everything from distorted monks at Newby Church to phantom cemetery mourners, whilst even Google Maps has got in on the act, with users periodically



Paranormal investigator Harry Price made his name thanks to his work on cases such as Borley Rectory and the strange matter of Gef, the talking mongoose

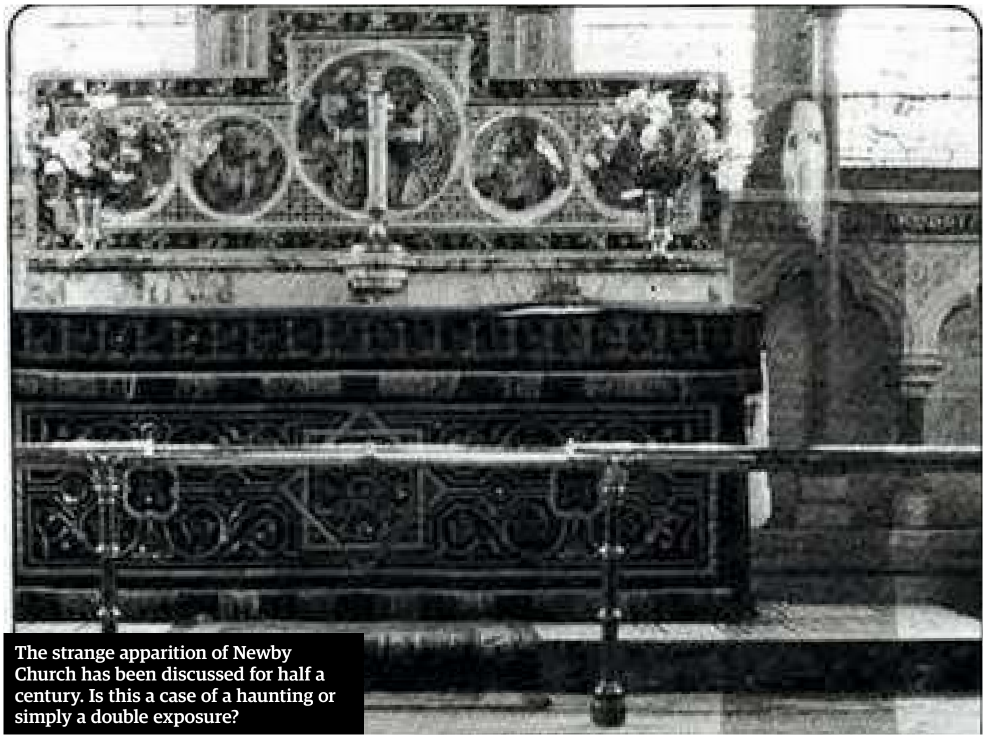

The strange apparition of Newby Church has been discussed for half a century. Is this a case of a haunting or simply a double exposure?

Image source: Via Wikipedia - Reverend KF Lord

reporting ghostly phenomena in their Street View photographs. Yet even where photographic analysis has failed to prove that the images have been manipulated, there's a degree of trust required when considering them as evidence. After all, even if a photographer claims that there was nobody in the frame when the shot was taken, it's not impossible that someone might have wandered unseen into the shot or colluded with the photographer in a deliberate hoax. In recent years the advent of digital photography has seen a rise in pictures of so-called orbs, which are small, floating balls of light visible on camera or film. Investigators believe that these are the first signs of a manifestation, but their critics suggest what they are actually capturing are digital artefacts, specks of dust or insects.

Critics of ghost-hunting are quick to point out that investigators are usually amateurs who have little specialist training or knowledge of how to get the best out of their technology. They also argue that believers are subject to confirmation bias, jumping to the conclusion that any anomaly is a ghost when in fact there can be a host of more earthly reasons to consider first, including radio interference, human intervention or simple reflections. Without controlled scientific conditions, they say, investigations cannot be trusted, even if those conducting them are honest.

When technology fails, investigators turn to tried and tested methods, and chief amongst these is the psychic medium. With no special equipment required, mediums visit a location and attempt to make contact with the spirits who walk there. Organised investigations often involve a medium, whose purpose is to lead communication with the spirits. TV shows such as *Most Haunted* have made such investigations hugely popular, with participants joining investigators and mediums in the hope of seeing proof of the paranormal.

Paranormal investigations and those who conduct them are here to stay. Perhaps one day someone will stumble on irrefutable proof of a ghost and capture it on camera in the scientific conditions that sceptics demand. Perhaps, however, the search for paranormal proof isn't about the conclusion itself, but about the journey believers and sceptics alike take to get there, and the spirited debates that they enjoy on the way.

Image source: Via Wikipedia - Earth100

Whilst some believe that orbs are spirit manifestations, photographic experts suggest that they are far more likely to be reflected moisture, dust or even insects

WATCHING THE PARANORMAL INVESTIGATORS

Why ghost-hunters have us glued to our sofas

Pranormal investigations make for popular, cheap and controversial television. In the UK, *Most Haunted* has run for a whopping 25 seasons, and enjoyed a period of huge popularity. It made a star of its flamboyant resident medium, the late Derek Acorah, who left the show amid allegations of fakery, when he was apparently tricked by production into channelling the spirit of a man who had never actually existed.

In the US, *Ghost Hunters* has criss-crossed the country in search of ghost activity for nearly 250 episodes. It has done much to popularise the use of technology in the search for ghosts and even has its own line of licensed ghost-hunting equipment!

Perhaps the most infamous televised paranormal investigation was *Ghostwatch*. Broadcast on BBC 1 on Halloween in 1992. *Ghostwatch* showcased an investigation in a suburban home. Hosted by Michael Parkinson and featuring well-loved TV presenters, some people believed that what they were watching was a documentary. When presenter Sarah Greene was attacked and viewers were warned that an evil spirit had used the broadcast to enter their homes, the BBC switchboards lit up with terrified callers. The resultant outcry included accusations that the programme had left some viewers hysterical and contributed to at least one suicide. Unsurprisingly, *Ghostwatch* has never been repeated.

The late Derek Acorah achieved notoriety as the resident medium on *Most Haunted*, where he claimed to channel everything from nobility to dead dogs

Image source: Via Wikipedia - Martin J Cooper

APPARITIONS

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Image source: Alamy

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Image source: Alamy

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Image source: Getty Images

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GHOSTLY LIGHTS

Even though electric lights have lit up many dark places that ghosts may lurk there are many reports of apparitions who bring their own light

Written by Ben Gazur

It is easy to forget just how unnaturally light our modern world is. For many people who live in cities the night sky, even at the darkest hour, is alive with the orange glow of street lights. Stars and planets cannot compete with those and so are hardly ever glimpsed. For much of human history though, darkness has been a powerful presence. With only candles and fires to drive out the black night, people were acutely sensitive to the appearance of other lights. Some of them had no obvious source and for many the most obvious explanation was that they were supernatural.

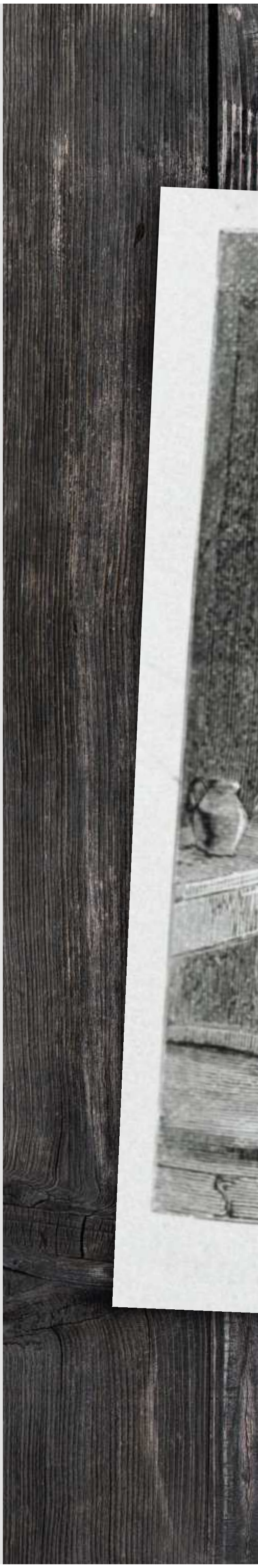
On 5 May 1807, Mr John Stephens was riding home between 9pm and 10pm. Suddenly a patch around his horse's ear began to glow with an amber hue, flecked with blue. The light began to spread as if drops of fire were sprinkled on the horse's mane. Placing his hand on the source of the light he felt no heat or indeed anything else irregular. The newspaper article about this event is in no doubt that this was a case of "ignis fatuus, or what is vulgarly called 'Will o'the Wisp.'"

While the educated may have been happy to cover their lack of understanding by calling all unexplained lights "ignes fatui" - Foolish Fires - it did nothing to stop many people seeing many ghostly light shows.

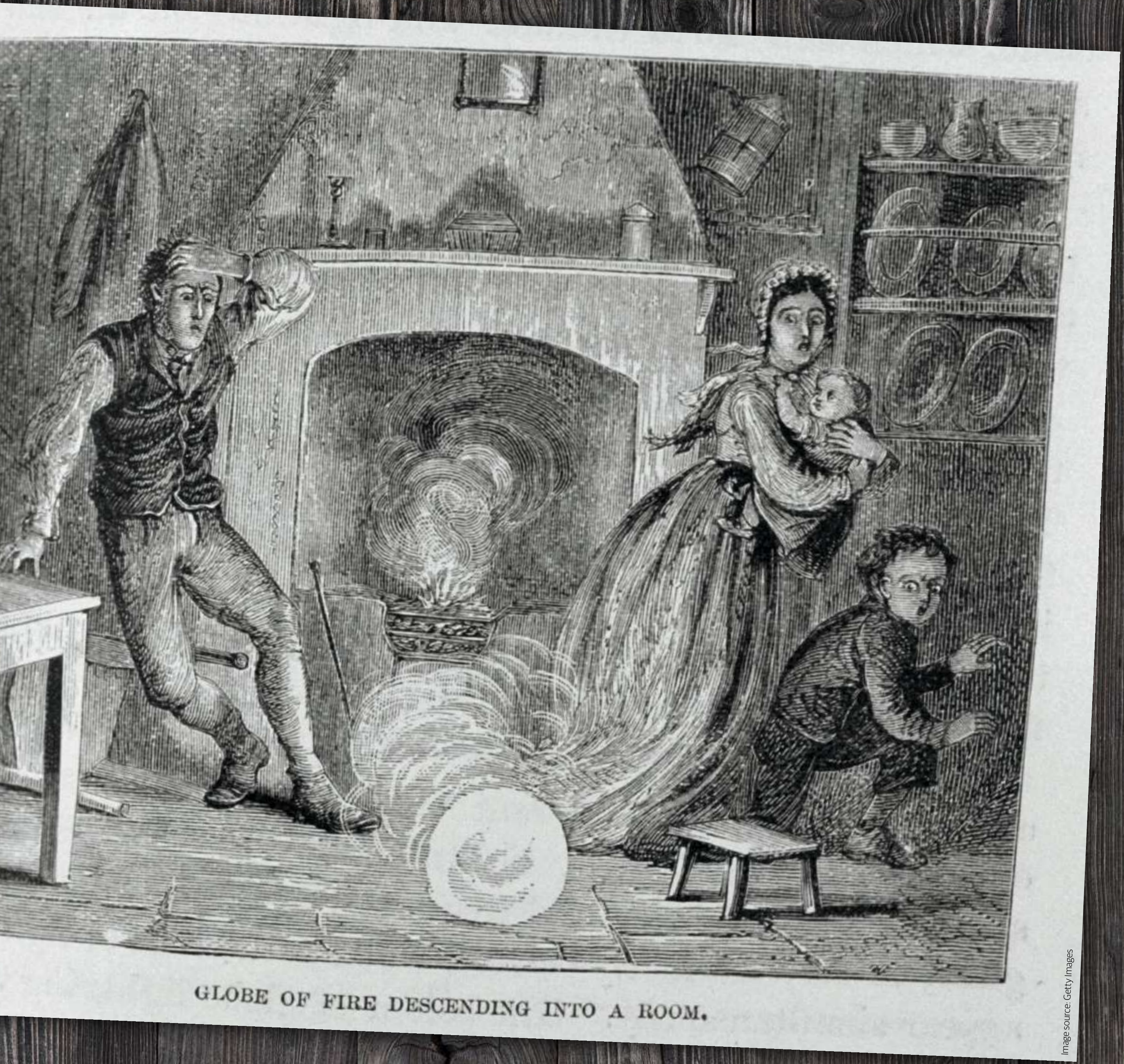
WILL O'THE WISP

Will o'the Wisps are perhaps the best known and most common form of ghost light. For hundreds of years there have been reports of strange lights drifting over boggy or damp places. In Sweden the belief was that a flame hovering above the water was the spirit of an unbaptised child trying desperately to enter the water for a blessing. If a graveyard is home to these lights then they were called 'grave candles' in England while in Japan cemeteries can be haunted by Hitodama - balls of energy. In Wales the Will o'the Wisp was seen as a fairy light, trying to lure the unwary from their path and into a swamp.

In folklore, then, these strange lights are intimately linked to unnatural sources, be they spirits of the dead or fairies and pixies. Those of a more materialist mindset see the locations where Will o'the Wisp are



Ghost lights can take a variety of forms and can appear in the most unexpected of places



GLOBE OF FIRE DESCENDING INTO A ROOM.

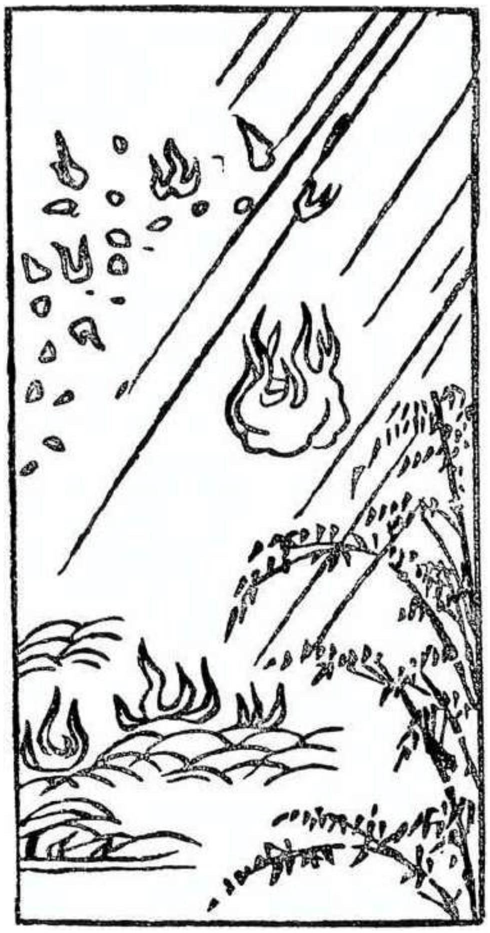
Image source: Getty Images

seen as offering an explanation. Swamps, bogs, and places of decay often produce methane, a flammable gas. When this ignites it produce a blue flame. Seen shimmering in the waters of damp areas they may seem to move and shift. But scientific explanations shift as well, depending on the science popular at the time. In 1840 one observer described the “ignes fatui” of the Will o’the Wisp that he saw as electrical in nature. “I am of the opinion that these are electric meteors which rise in exhalations from out of the earth.”

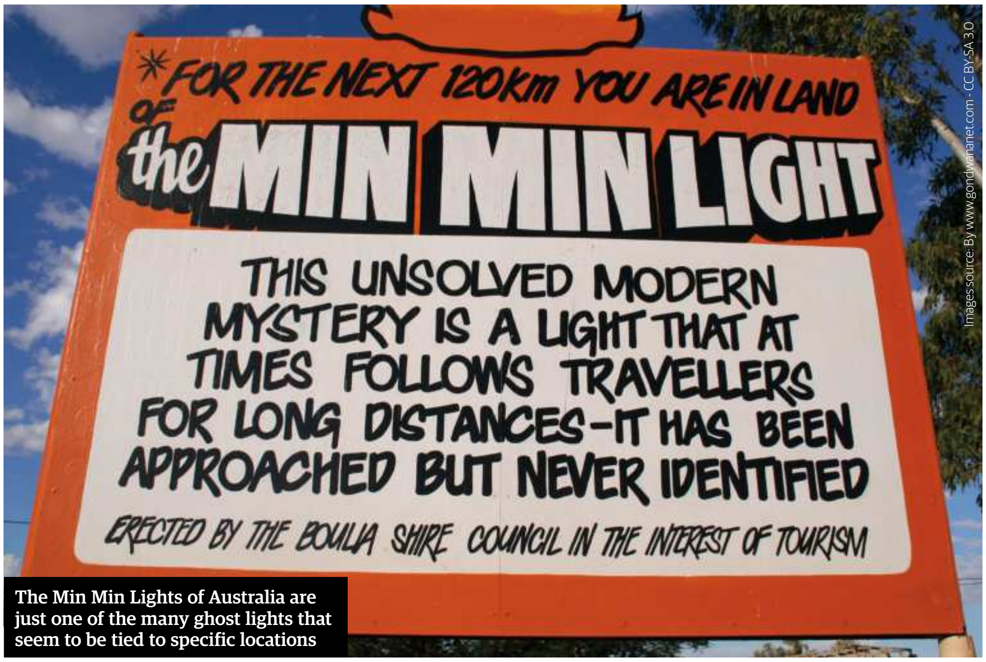
ST ELMO’S FIRE

Sailors are prone to superstition. When they saw fiery and crackling lights in on their masts you might think they would be terrified. Instead this light, known as St Elmo’s Fire, was considered an omen of good fortune. Named for the patron saint of sailors, many thought it a message from their protector. Ancient Chinese mariners also attributed these lights to a blessing from the goddess of sailors.

The phenomenon has been known since at least the 1st century CE when Pliny the Elder recorded it. “Stars [his name for St Elmo’s Fire] make their appearance both at land and sea. I have seen a light in that form on the spears of soldiers keeping watch by night upon the ramparts. They are seen also on the sail-yards, and other parts of ships, making an audible sound... These lights do sometimes, about evening, rest on men’s heads and are a great and good omen.”



Ghost lights appear in many cultures and are often depicted as hovering balls of fire, as in this Japanese print


*FOR THE NEXT 120km YOU ARE IN LAND OF
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THIS UNSOLVED MODERN MYSTERY IS A LIGHT THAT AT TIMES FOLLOWS TRAVELLERS FOR LONG DISTANCES–IT HAS BEEN APPROACHED BUT NEVER IDENTIFIED
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The Min Min Lights of Australia are just one of the many ghost lights that seem to be tied to specific locations

Images source: By www.gondwananet.com - CC BY-SA 3.0

On land St Elmo’s Fire can be particularly startling. At Pikes Peak in Colorado, observers have described kitchen utensils seeming to burn with a fire that does not burn. The breath of animals is also said to turn to flame at times. In the meteorological observatory atop Ben Nevis it was sometimes noted during snowstorms that the roof of the building was glowing. At other times it was an observer’s hair. Lifting a walking stick into the air could send light streaming upwards from its tip.

Today the phenomenon is well understood as being caused by strong electric charges that form in the atmosphere, which can be caused by storms or even volcanic eruptions. The effect looks somewhat like that made by a Tesla coil.

THE PHANTOM FIRE SHIP OF BAIE DES CHALEURS

In the Baie des Chaleurs on the coast of Canada, a strange arc of light is sometimes seen on the horizon, often arising just before a storm rolls into the bay. This effect is sometimes called the Phantom Ship and there are several local tales the are supposed to explain its appearance. According to one, in 1501 a Portuguese slaver came to round up members of the Mi’kmaq tribe. He was brutally executed for his efforts and when, a year later, the slaver’s brother arrived to find out what had happened to him the locals set fire to his ship too. As the captain and crew of the vessel leaped into the water they put a curse on the sea, promising to haunt it for a thousand years. Locals have reported seeing the apparitions of ghostly sailors too.

Another tale describes how a pirate band captured and killed a woman in the area and it was her dying malediction that has cursed the pirates to burn on the water for evermore. Of course few scientists are happy with these stories and have looked to natural events as causes of the lights seen. One suggests that since the light appears before storms it may well be a case of St Elmo’s fire. Others think that it may be caused by the release of methane from seaweed rotting under the water that is disturbed as the storm approaches like a vast Will o’the Wisp.

> Once thought to be the product of phantoms or fairies, ghost lights are now more often ‘explained’ as UFO phenomena

LIGHTS AND LOCATIONS

Nine miles outside the town of Marfa, Texas, there is an area known to be home to a fascinating light display. As early as 1883 a young ranch worker saw what he took to be the fires of Native Americans nearby, but when he reported this to his superiors they said that they too had seen lights before, but when they investigated they found nothing, not even ashes.

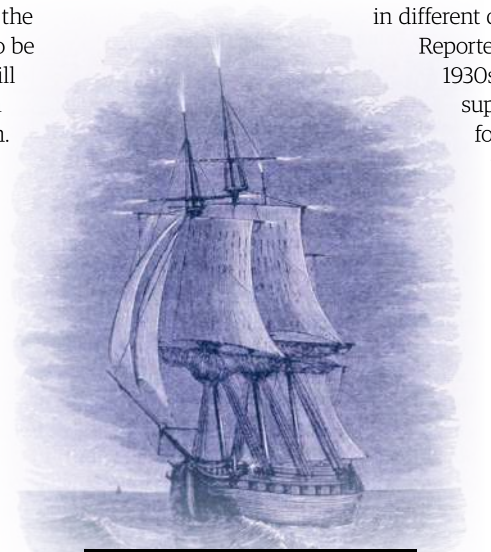
Since then many more people have reported the lights, which are said to hover just above the vegetation or zoom around, splitting apart and

> “Each year thousands of people descend on the Mekong River to observe the Naga Lights. These balls of reddish light emerge from the water and rise hundreds of meters into the air before vanishing”

reforming. For the ease of visitors a Marfa Lights Viewing Centre has been built providing a deck, binoculars, and toilets for those on the hunt for these ghostly lights. Other locations too have drawn visitors, sometimes in great numbers, to view their inexplicable lights.

In the Australian outback the Min Min Lights are said to be fuzzy balls of light that will approach and retreat from the people watching them. It is said that if you chase one of these lights and catch it you will not live to tell anyone about it, which may explain why no living person claims to have caught one.

Meanwhile, each year thousands of people descend on Southeast Asia's Mekong River, particularly in Thailand, to observe the Naga Lights. These balls of reddish light emerge from the water and rise hundreds of meters into the air before vanishing. Local legend attributes the lights to the Phaya Naga, a giant snake, said to live at the bottom of the river.



Not all ghost lights are floating balls; St Elmo's Fire appears as a crackling halo of light

MODERN EXPLANATIONS

In the Hessdalen valley in Norway bright lights of white, yellow, and red have been spotted, which sometimes last just moments while at others they last for over an hour. They might bob peacefully in place or charge furiously in different directions.

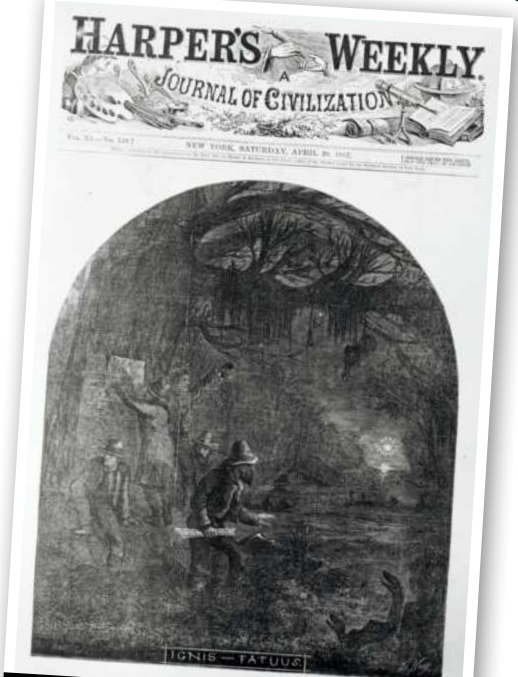
Reported since at least the 1930s, there have been no supernatural explanations for these lights but instead modern scientific theories, as well as extraterrestrial ones, have been applied to them.

The 20th century has seen a spread of rational interpretations for ghost lights. No ghostly origin is posited for the Hessdalen lights but rather earthly ones.

Some think the lights are literally generated from the earth as the region has a high proportion of quartz in the ground that can generate charge through the piezoelectric effect as the rock is put under pressure. Could the decay of radioactive radon be a cause of the lights? No one, it seems, is blaming fairies or phantoms.

In a shift of folklore and alternative thinking, there are groups that believe the Hessdalen Lights are UFOs, possibly related to alien visitation. An observation system to record the lights was set up by UFO monitoring groups from Norway and Sweden.

As belief in fairies and ghosts collapses, more ghost lights are being seen through scientific or pseudoscientific eyes. Whatever the real cause of these mysterious lights, though, it would be a good idea to look out for them in the dark.



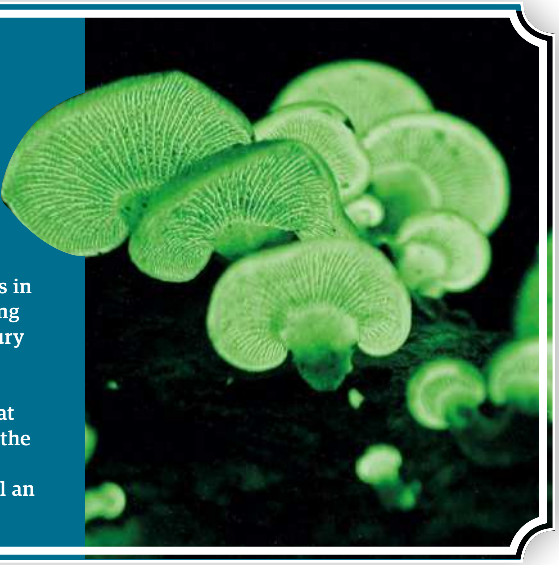
Ignis fatuus, another name for a Will o'the Wisp, came to mean a misleading light that could lead one to ruin

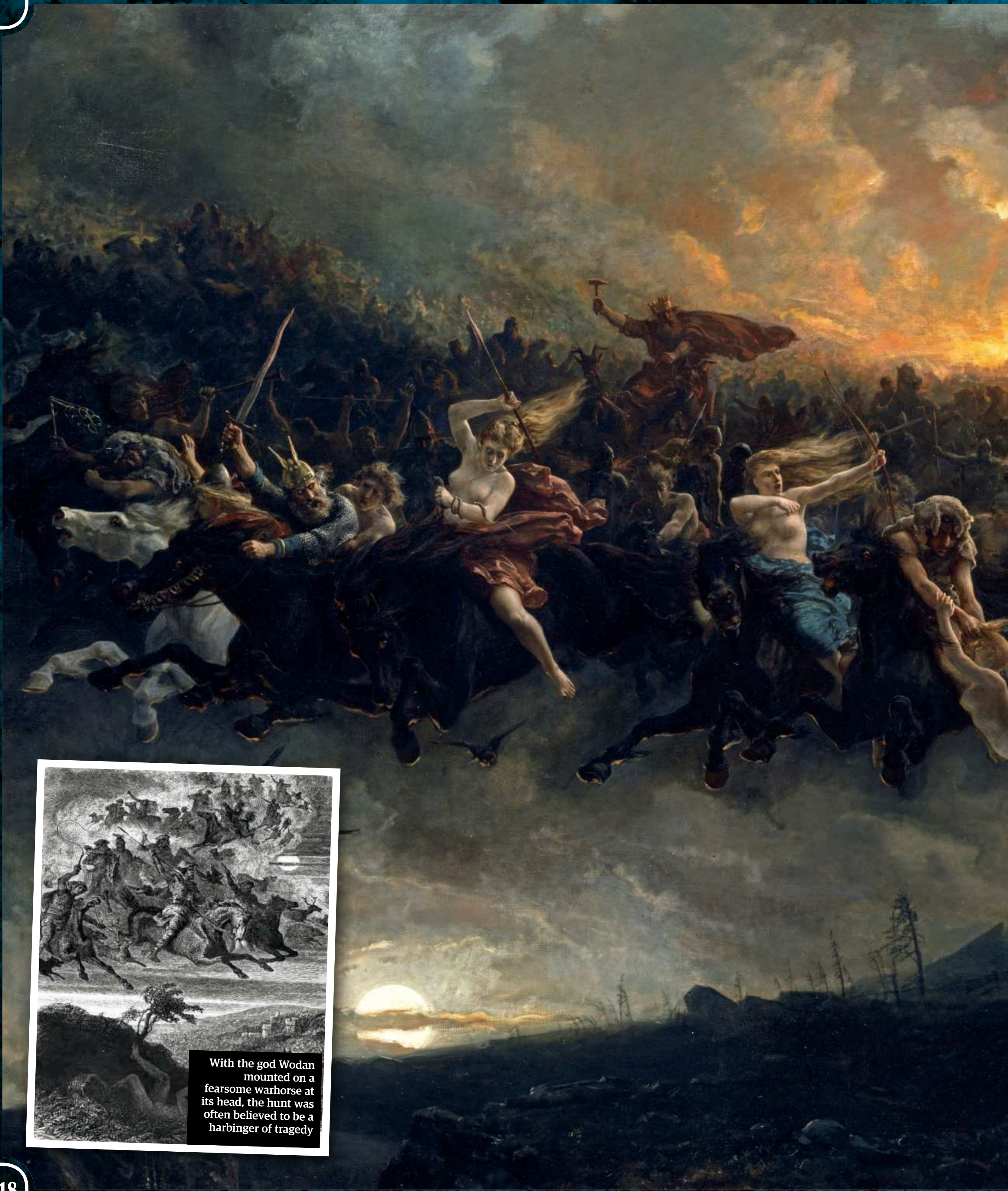
FOXFIRE OR FUNGI?

Over 2000 years ago, researchers like Aristotle and Pliny the Elder noted strange lights they saw. Instead of being the product of fire and heat, these lights were cold to the touch and an eerie green. Pliny the Elder noticed that wood in some olive groves would glow at night. In a time when candles and torches were the sole method of driving back the darkness, these mysterious lights were a marvel.

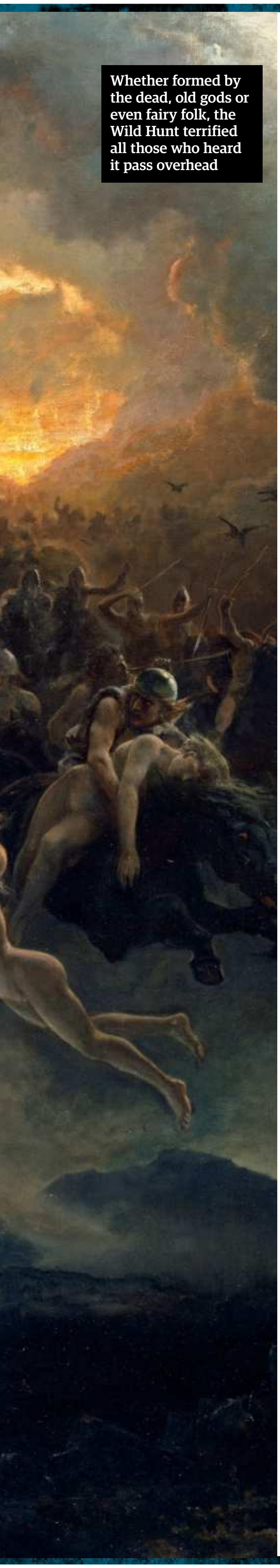
Known as foxfire or fairy lights, many cultures made use of these uncanny light sources. Some Scandinavian homes used rotting wood to lighten their gloomy rooms. In Micronesia glowing wood was incorporated into ritual clothes.

In the 16th century it was discovered that some mushrooms actually produce their own light, a process called bioluminescence. It was even suggested that these fungi should be painted on dials in early submarines so that oxygen-consuming flames need not be used. In the 19th century the phenomenon of foxfire was finally explained - instead of being an unearthly cold fire burning in the wood, the glow that sometime accompanied rotting wood was the work of bioluminescent fungi digesting it. Whether fungi or fairies, however, it is still an amazing sight.





With the god Wodan mounted on a fearsome warhorse at its head, the hunt was often believed to be a harbinger of tragedy


Whether formed by the dead, old gods or even fairy folk, the Wild Hunt terrified all those who heard it pass overhead

THE WILD HUNT

Often seen as a portent of tragedy, the legend of the Wild Hunt tearing through the skies struck fear into the hearts of our ancestors

Written by Catherine Curzon

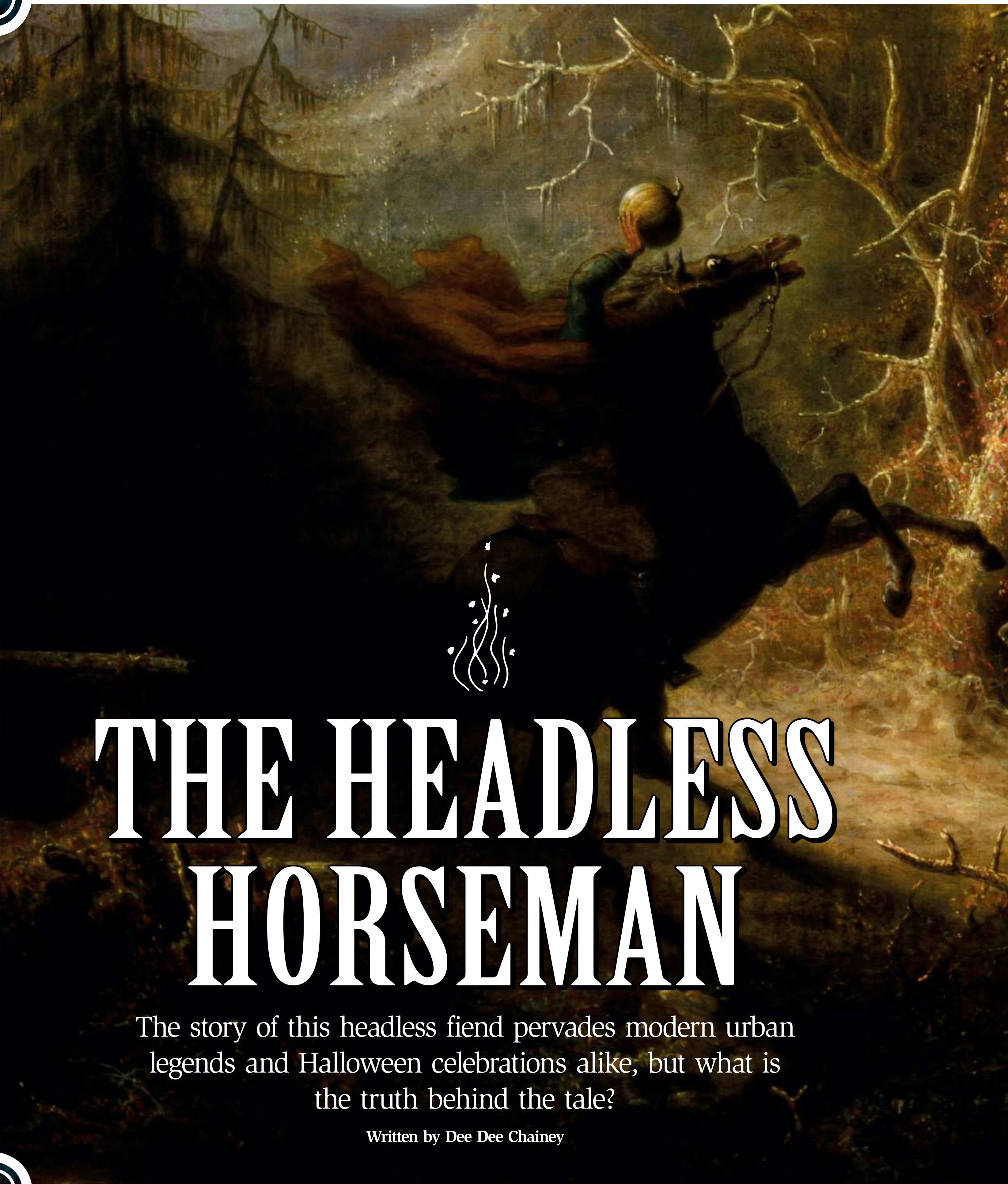
The Wild Hunt is famed in the annals European folklore, with every country having its own variation and some, such as Germany, having a number of regional takes on the myth. The Wild Hunt was the name popularly given to a supernatural band of hunters who passed through the sky in wild pursuit of their unseen prey, dogs baying and hunting horns blaring. Depending on the region and belief, the hunters were believed to be gods, elves, fairies or even the lost spirits of the dead. The leader of the hunt is frequently identified as the Norse god Wodan, but it has also been claimed that biblical characters or even the Devil himself rides at the head of the pack.

Seeing the Wild Hunt was believed to herald some sort of tragedy, from war and pestilence to the death of the unlucky person who witnessed the hunt as it tore through the sky. If the hunt were being led by fairy folk, they might drag the unfortunate witness into the underworld there and then, while hunts of the dead could harvest the souls of sleeping people. Nobody was safe, it seemed.

The Wild Hunt myth was popularised by Jacob Grimm, who compared hunt folklore across Europe and united the phenomena under the name Wilde Jagd. Grimm believed that folklore of the 19th century was rooted in ancient beliefs that had long since been lost, and he placed the origins of the Wild Hunt in the pre-Christian era, with Wodan riding a fearsome warhorse at the head of a procession of deities. This, Grimm wrote, is what led to the Wild Hunt being perceived as a portent of war. He believed that as the centuries passed, Christian beliefs twisted the various legends until the deities had become a wild and ungoverned pack of fearsome spectres, devoted to wreaking mischief on humankind.

The actual origins of the Wild Hunt may owe something to environmental and natural phenomena as much as superstition, as ancient people sought to interpret storms and other freak weather occurrences. What's certain is that, from devilish hunters chasing unbaptised spirits in Britain, to the phantom Spanish nobleman condemned to hunt for eternity as punishment for his lecherous ways, or even Wodan and his dogs racing across the skies of Denmark at the change of the season, it is a story that has captivated generations of people across Europe for centuries.

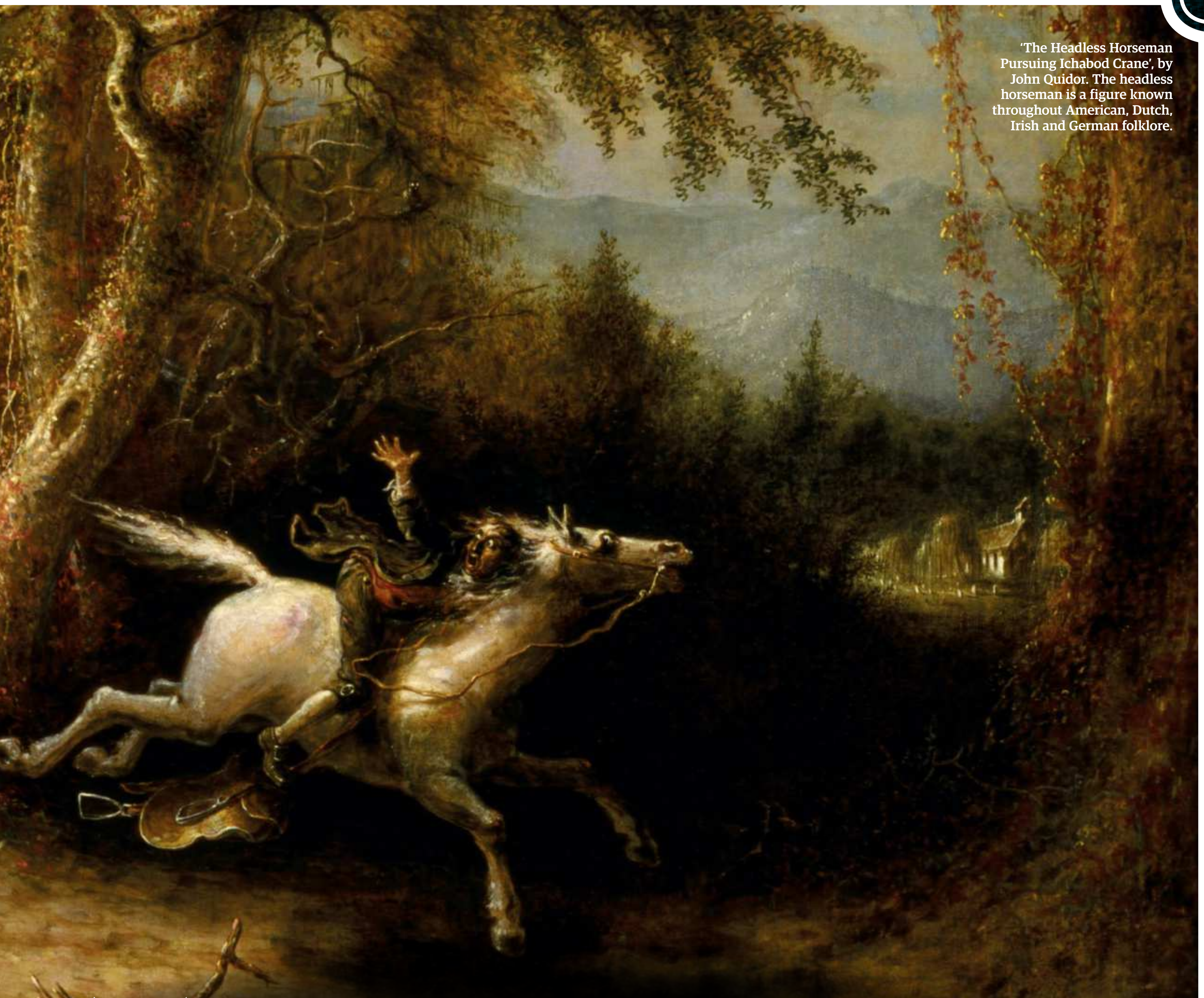
> "Seeing the Wild Hunt was believed to herald some sort of tragedy, from war and pestilence to death"



THE HEADLESS HORSEMAN

The story of this headless fiend pervades modern urban legends and Halloween celebrations alike, but what is the truth behind the tale?

Written by Dee Dee Chainey



'The Headless Horseman Pursuing Ichabod Crane', by John Quidor. The headless horseman is a figure known throughout American, Dutch, Irish and German folklore.

The headless horseman is a well-known figure today - one that instantly conjures Christopher Walken's grim severed head from the 1999 American gothic horror film *Sleepy Hollow.* Yet the trope has a much longer history than many imagine, and headless ghosts are a worldwide phenomena, populating folkloric tales from Europe and beyond.

Many tales tell that such ghosts are set to roam the Earth for eternity, searching in vain for their lost heads. Yet others carry their head with them, with a darker motive: to wreak vengeance for their own deaths on any who cross their path. In other lore they are harbingers of doom. Whatever their motivations for their endless quest, the motif is a dark one that leaves anger, vengeance and death in his wake. *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* by Washington Irving was first published in 1820, in his collection *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* The tale begins by setting the scene, telling of the Dutch settlers of Tarrytown, New York, and their most famous ghost: a Hessian soldier who was beheaded by a cannonball in 'a nameless war', who roams from his burial place in the churchyard to the site of battle in search of his lost head. It develops when Ichabod Crane, a Connecticut teacher, takes on a new position in the glen of Sleepy Hollow. Ichabod seeks the hand of a young heiress, Katrina van Tassel, yet a local Dutchman, Brom Bones, has also set his sights upon the girl. Katrina rejects Ichabod one night at a party, at which he sets off on his horse. Yet, along the way he is chased by the Headless Horseman. For the finale, the phantom throws his head at Ichabod, who disappears entirely. On searching for the man later, all that is found is a smashed pumpkin at the spot where he fell.

Many people are surprised to learn that the legend is not actually real folklore, but a work of fiction, considered 'folkloresque' - when popular culture reuses or appropriates folklore. Many trace the beginnings of Irving's story to existing Dutch traditions in the New York region. It is believed that a real-life Hessian soldier was beheaded by a cannonball in the Battle of White Plains, which took place around the Halloween of 1776. Another Dutch folktale tells of a headless horseman who appeared at Tarrytown, New York - again at Halloween. It is thought that Irving moved to the region in his younger years, and would have been well aware of the local history and legends. Irving's storytelling skills have been cited as the reason for this, along with his innate ability to blend fact with fiction.

Yet, we can look to European folklore for the true origins of this murky figure. Some believe that Irving took inspiration for his tale from *The Chase* - a translation of the German poem *The Wild Huntsman* by Gottfried Bürger - written by Sir Walter Scott in 1796, rooted in the Germanic tradition of the Wild Hunt. Indeed, a tale from Saxony collected by the Brothers Grimm tells how the Wild Huntsman himself was actually a real-life hunter before his death, only transforming into the legendary figure after beseeching God to grant him the mercy of being able to take part in his beloved hunt until the dawn of Judgement Day, which God indeed did. It is known that Irving and Scott were friends, so this is not an unlikely scenario.

The Legend of Sleepy Hollow is not a real legend, rather it's a ghost story influenced by European folklore relating to headless horseman archetypes

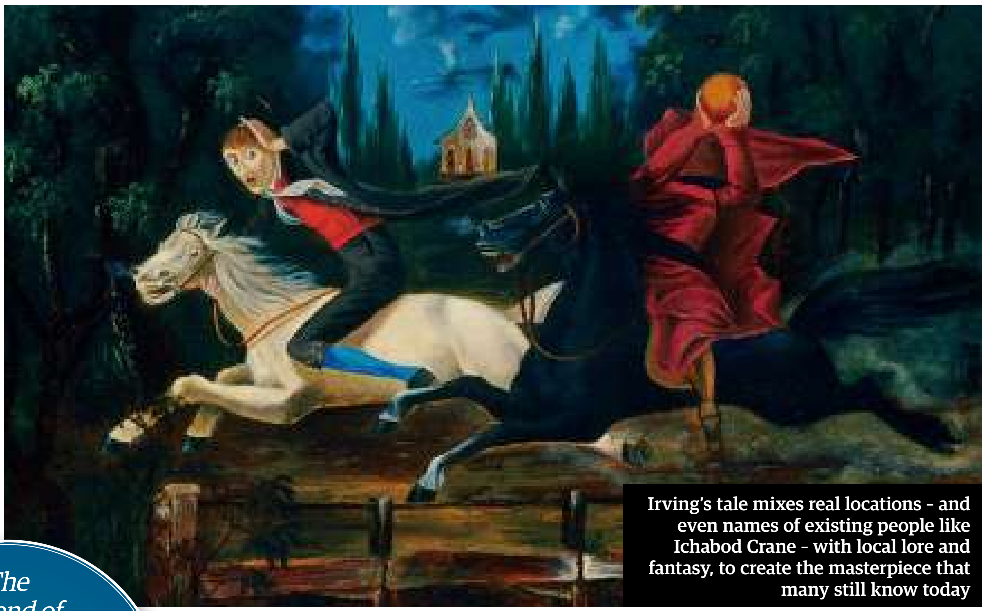
Irving himself was of Cornish and Scottish descent, and travelling in Britain when he wrote the famous tale. Many claim the Irish Dullahan is the original headless horseman, and the basis for Irvine's ghoul. Some believe the Dullahan has origins in the bloodthirsty pre-Christian god Crom Dubh, who demanded sacrificial victims were beheaded in his honour. The spectre rides a black horse and carries a human spine as a whip. He holds his head below his other arm, with skin resembling mouldy cheese, all the while looking into the night with clear vision. Some say it shines like a lantern in the darkness. He often drives a coach pulled by headless horses - the death coach, or Cóiste Bodhar - lit with skulls containing candles, made of human bones and the paraphernalia of death. It's said that when the rider stops his coach, he calls out a name into the night, and the chosen victim dies instantly. The death coach is something that appears across British and Irish lore as a death omen. The most famous character associated with it is Anne Boleyn, whose ghost is said to haunt numerous locations. One of the most striking appearances occurs at Blickling Hall in Norfolk on the anniversary of her death, May 19th. Anne is brought to her birthplace, head in lap, by a strange carriage pulled by four headless horses, and driven by a headless horseman.

Those killed by beheading are often considered restless spirits. Headless ghosts abound in British folklore, from the barghuest of Yorkshire, to Coliunn Gun Cheann (the Headless Trunk), a monster that roamed the MacDonald lands in Scotland, mutilating travellers until one day defeated by a clansman. A headless horseman is said to gallop along between Atwick and Skipsea in the East Riding of Yorkshire. The headless horseman is not unknown in Germany, yet here he often pursues only those who have committed some dark deed. Hans Jagenteufel is a headless horseman from Saxony, whose tale is related by the Brothers Grimm. Here, the fiend tells a woman out collecting acorns of his wicked life, as if his fate is his just punishment.

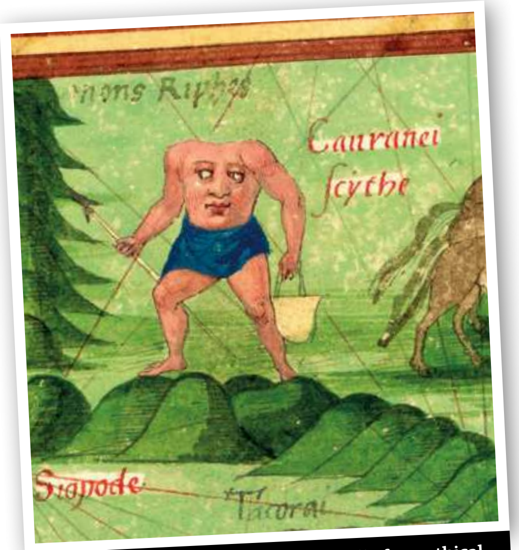
Yet headless horsemen are not just a European phenomena; they also appear in Asia. One Indian tale from Fyzabad tells of a whole ghostly army of eerily silent headless horsemen that appears after dark, said to belong to Prince Sayyad Sálár, and people are afraid to venture out at night. Another tale from northern India tells how a Gávli prince fought a saint, cutting off his head. Yet the body continued fighting, picked up his head, and lead the army to a hill, which swallowed them up.

Chinese legends tell of Huang Di, the legendary Yellow Emperor, who battled a mysterious giant. Yet, when beheaded, the giant did not die, but set himself to the task of finding his head. The Emperor hid the head inside a mountain. At this, the giant forced himself to see through his nipples, and carried on fighting, becoming a symbol of steadfastness. This mirrors one of the oldest English examples of a headless rider, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

Saints are notoriously good at remaining alive after decapitation. Martyrs who suffer this fate

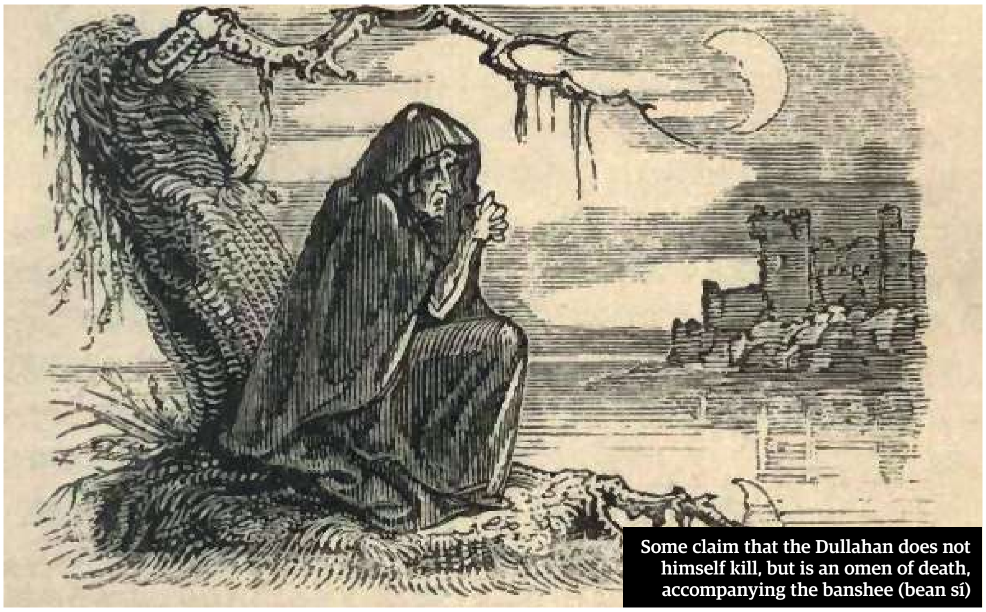


Irving's tale mixes real locations - and even names of existing people like Ichabod Crane - with local lore and fantasy, to create the masterpiece that many still know today



Pliny the Elder and Herodotus both tell of a mythical race of headless creatures called the Blemmyes, who had no heads, with eyes and mouths on their chests

"Those killed by beheading are often considered restless spirits. Headless ghosts abound in British folklore, from the barghuest of Yorkshire, to Coliunn Gun Cheann (the Headless Trunk)"

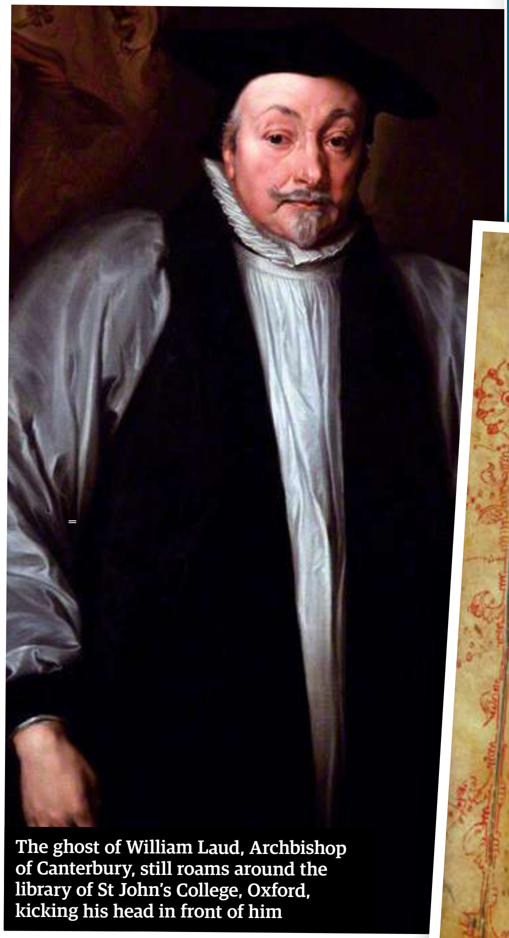


Some claim that the Dullahan does not himself kill, but is an omen of death, accompanying the banshee (bean sí)

are usually depicted carrying their heads, known as cephalophores. *The Golden Legend* tells the tale of St Denis, who walked from Montmartre to the Basilica of Saint-Denis in Paris – his severed head preaching the whole while. The 8th-century Passio of St Justus of Beauvais tells a heart-wrenching tale, in which the nine-year-old saint was decapitated by the Romans. His body was found cradling his head by his own father, at which the saint asked for it to be taken back to his mother to receive a final kiss.

We can't help but wonder if the head is an inherent symbol of transition, of existing in some liminal place between life and death. It is believed that removing the head from the body keeps the person's spirit in limbo, preventing them from existing fully in either realm, and keeps them tied to a place as acting guardian. In British folklore, many examples of guardian skulls exist. Indigenous Australian tradition says that if a corpse is buried without the head, the spirit can never rest. We might see why some horsemen wander the Earth still, searching for their lost heads. Yet, many scholars suggest that, in European folklore, decapitation is often used to bind the restless dead, to make sure that their spirits do not return – particularly in cases where a person is thought to be evil, a criminal, or a vampire. 19th century accounts from North Yorkshire tell of heads being cut off people who have committed atrocious deeds, and then placed between the legs.

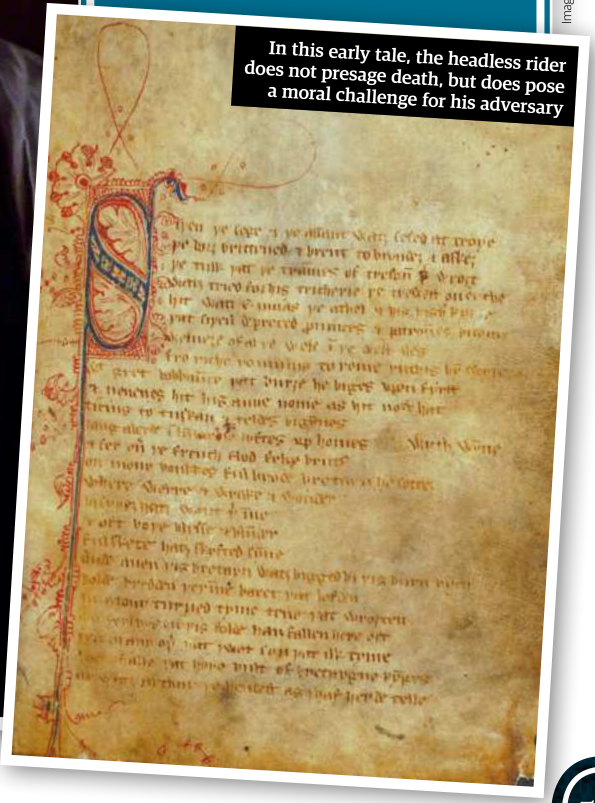
Some suggest that the figure of the headless horseman tells a tale that is one of revenge and retribution. We do see themes of injustice and revenge in the endless search for the lost head, and justice meted out. Speaking on a deeper level, some say the tales tell of how people want to flee their past, yet it always haunts them. So, while tales of headless ghouls lurk around every dark corner, we can also muster some sympathy for the headless dead, and the restless fate they must endure. Try to remember this, dear reader, when the nights turn dark – and try not to lose your own head with fear!



The ghost of William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, still roams around the library of St John's College, Oxford, kicking his head in front of him

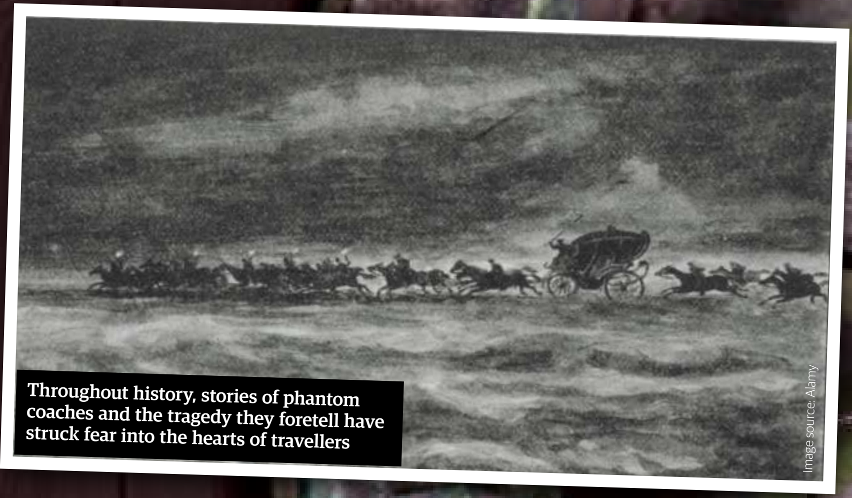
SIR GAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT

In this 14th century Arthurian tale, Sir Gawain is challenged by a stranger clad in green. He promises to give his axe to anyone who will play a game: a man must strike him, but in a year and a day the stranger will strike back. Sir Gawain agrees, chopping off the Green Knight's head. Yet he merely picks it up and rides away. A few days before their arranged meeting, Gawain stays at a lord's castle. A bargain is struck that he will give to Gawain whatever he catches on the hunt, while Gawain must give anything he himself gains in return. The lord's wife tries to seduce Gawain, which he resists. He gives in to her last offer: for three kisses, she will bestow a belt that will ensure his safety. Gawain then gives three kisses to the lord in return for the spoils of his hunt. The next day, Gawain binds his neck with the belt, and takes only a minor wound at the Green Knight's blow. The knight reveals that he is actually the lord, and his wife is the sorceress Morgan le Fay, and the whole thing was a charade. Despite Gawain's shame, the lord decrees him the most blameless knight of all.



In this early tale, the headless rider does not presage death, but does pose a moral challenge for his adversary

Images source: Wiki



Throughout history, stories of phantom coaches and the tragedy they foretell have struck fear into the hearts of travellers

Image source: Alamy

> "It was said that Satan carried Weir to unimaginable debaucheries in an infernal coach"

PHANTOM COACHES

It's not just houses that can be haunted; empty highways still bustle with the sight of phantom coaches carrying their long-dead passengers

Written by Catherine Curzon

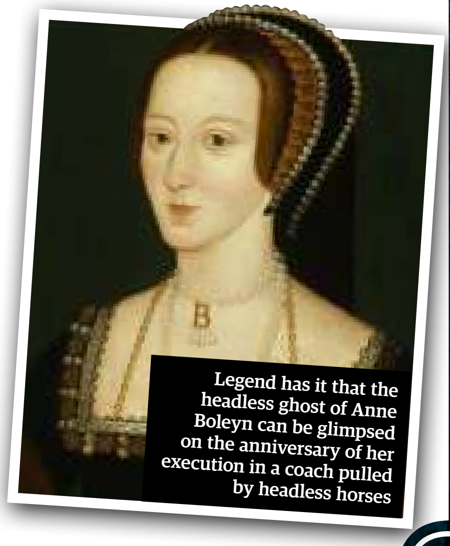
In centuries gone by, Great Britain was crisscrossed by a network of roads and lanes busy with horse-drawn vehicles. Some of these roads have disappeared, long since paved over or built upon, while others still exist as part of the modern landscape. Yet though the roads may have vanished, tales tell of phantom coaches that still travel the thoroughfares they once knew so well. Often the conveyances are silent, appearing from nowhere with a legion of spectral horses leading them out of the underworld and a ghostly coachman - headless or otherwise - at the reins.

The roadways of the past were fraught with danger. From accidents to highwaymen, even a simple journey could be a perilous and sometimes fatal excursion. None know this better than the passengers of a coach that crashed into the River Frome on a summer evening, and still does from time to time, always on the stroke of midnight. In Yorkshire, meanwhile, the Earl of Northumberland's coach has travelled the streets of Beverley for nearly 500 years. Inside sits a skeletal passenger, while in Edinburgh, Major Thomas Weir's phantom coach is a hellish affair indeed.

Weir was a 17th century evangelist who was executed after he confessed to consorting with the devil. It was said that Satan carried Weir to unimaginable debaucheries in an infernal coach, and for centuries following Weir's execution, residents of his former home on West Bow heard the major's ghostly carriage thundering through the streets, dragging him to the underworld.

Even royalty gets in on the act in the shape of Henry VIII's ill-fated wife, Anne Boleyn. Every year on the anniversary of Anne's execution, a coach pulled by headless horses and driven by a headless coachman is said to arrive at the door of Blickling Hall. Sitting in the coach is Anne Boleyn herself, her decapitated head tucked neatly beneath her arm.

Novelist Thomas Hardy found inspiration for *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* in the legends of a phantom carriage carrying eloping lovers John Turberbille and Lady Anne Howard over an ancient bridge in Dorset. Though some phantom coaches replay an accident or journey over and over, they aren't always so harmless, and the appearance of this carriage is said to foretell of a catastrophe. Just like Tess, for those who see the carriage leaving Woolbridge Manor, death is never far away.



Legend has it that the headless ghost of Anne Boleyn can be glimpsed on the anniversary of her execution in a coach pulled by headless horses

TERROR OF THE SEAS

Sightings of mysterious, ghostly vessels have occurred throughout history, and innumerable words, both spoken and written, have been spent discussing these shiver-inducing encounters

Written by Willow Winsham

The term "ghost ship" has come to describe two types of mysterious vessel. The first is a true ghost ship in every sense of the term, an apparition with overtly supernatural origins. Sightings of such ships are often taken to be portents of doom, heralding misfortune for those unlucky enough to see them. There is often talk of a curse, the crew of such ships doomed to sail for eternity due to some misdeed. These ghostly ships also tend to appear on the anniversary of the tragedy that led them to be cursed in the first place.

Perhaps the most famous ghost ship of legend is the Flying Dutchman, and there are very few who have not heard the name of this fearful wonder. According to legend, the Dutchman, often under full sail, appears in the distance, often during a storm. It is crewed by ghosts, and the vessel is doomed to never be able to make port, due to some terrible crime committed many years before by the captain or crew.

The earliest version of the Dutchman legend can be traced to the late 18th century. According to the tale, a ship tried and failed to make port off the Cape of Good Hope, and, with no pilot to guide them, fell victim to the tempestuous seas. John MacDonald reported in his writings that in bad weather, the ship would appear once more. This basic legend soon developed into a more foreboding version, with the ill-fated ship looking as if it would run down those who saw it. By the end of the 18th century the ghostly ship was now known as the Flying Dutchman. Further mutation of the story introduced the doomed crew element: because of committing an unspeakable crime they were cursed to sail until they had atoned for their evil. The Flying Dutchman continues to grow in popularity, and references are made to her in numerous works of fiction, music and art.

The most famous sighting of the Dutchman was made by the future King George V of England himself. On 11 July 1881, the prince, his brother, and tutor, all witnessed a glowing

A mysterious glow is sighted in the distance, identified as a ghostly vessel under full sail, bearing down on terrified onlookers, only to vanish once more

Image source: Getty Images

phantom ship while on a voyage. They were not alone: the apparition was sighted by other members of their crew before it vanished. Tragedy followed – the seaman who reported the vision later fell from a great height to the deck below, and did not survive. In an attempt to bring credence to the tale, attempts have been made to identify the captain of the Dutchman. One such contender is Bernard Fokke or Barend Fockesz. This real life 17th century sea captain hailed from Friesland and served the Dutch East India Company. Fokke was able to make the journey from Holland to Java with what seemed to be impossible speed – letters delivered corroborate the fact he made this distance in a little over three months in 1678. This led to the growth of a legend that he had made a pact with the Devil, selling his soul in exchange for this preternatural speed. Another contender is the less substantial Captain Van Der Decken, another Dutch-born captain whose name is often linked with the Dutchman. After vowing he would not abandon a voyage in a storm, the confident captain was doomed to keep sailing for eternity.

> Ghost ship tales often build up by accruing elements from different nations' folklore, as multicultural crews retold the stories to each other

The Caleuche is a popular figure in Chiloe folklore, and sightings of this ghostly ship have been reported off the coast of Chile since the mid-16th century. Far from being a thing of terror, the Caleuche is often said to be something of a party ship, with enticing musi and bright lights, alluring and fun. Things are far from what they seem however: the Caleuche is manned by witches, wizards, and the ghosts of those who have died at sea. Sightings of the Caleuche occur most frequently at night, sighted from the beaches, beckoning and tempting. Although those on board are said to be free and happy, there were dangers. It was possible to be kidnapped or even killed by a Caleuche sailor. Some were taken aboard only to be returned minus their speech or sanity. Those on board were able to shapeshift, as could the ship itself: the Caleuche was known to disguise itself as a different ship, only to reveal its true nature before vanishing, to the astonishment of those who witnessed it.

Another well-known ghostly ship is the Lady Lovibond, which Left Deal Harbour, Kent, 13 Feb 1748, never to return. The traditional tale is that the newly wedded captain, unwilling to be parted from his bride, took her aboard and set sail for Portugal. The first mate, driven mad by the strength of the unrequited love he felt for the captain's wife, took control of the vessel. Oblivious, the captain and the rest of those on board were celebrating when the mate steered the Lovibond onto the Goodwin Sands, where it sank with no survivors. The Goodwin Sands are a treacherous sandbank, with many ships lost there in 18th century and beyond. According to the legend, the Lady Lovibond appears every 50 years, and although faithfully kept her appointment until 1948, the anticipated 1998 sighting was noticeably absent.

Most of what we think we know today about the Mary Celeste comes from Arthur Conan Doyle's story, in which many facts are changed or neglected

As well as fictional ghost ships, there are some that have grounding in historical fact. These ships entered legend due to being discovered abandoned, derelict, with no clue as to the fate of those who should have been aboard. The Mary Celeste, or Marie Celeste as she is now widely known, is the most famous of this type of ghost ship. The American merchant brig became infamous after she was discovered floating off the Azores on 4 December 1872. There was no one on board, no signs of a struggle, the vessel deserted. Cargo, provisions and the belongings

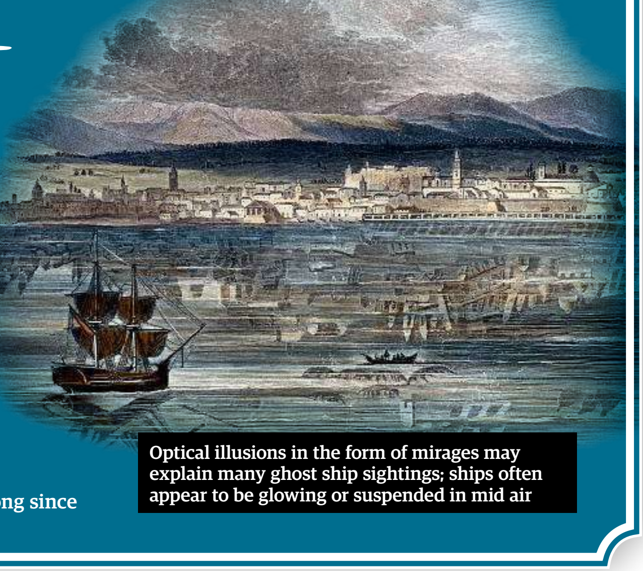
EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

Sightings of spectral ships have been recorded across the world, playing a prominent part in the folklore of many nations and cultures. That thousands of witnesses throughout history believe they have seen something extraordinary is without question. But what exactly have they seen, and how might such sightings be explained?

The most generally accepted and likely explanation is that reported sightings of ghost ships are in fact caused by mirages or optical illusions. Fata Morgana – said to be named after the Arthurian Morgan le Fay – is a type of superior mirage in which the sun creates a perfect replica image in the air of an unseen ship just over the horizon. Under the right conditions, rays of light bend as they pass through layers of air of different temperatures, creating the illusion.

Other explanations for these ghostly maritime sightings vary in degrees of credibility and outlandishness. Among them are visual effects caused by glowing marine plant life, and the intervention of UFOs for unknown reasons.

Then of course there is always the possibility that sightings of ghostly vessels are exactly what they seem to be: a glimpse of a ship that has long since



Optical illusions in the form of mirages may explain many ghost ship sightings; ships often appear to be glowing or suspended in mid air

Image source: Getty Images

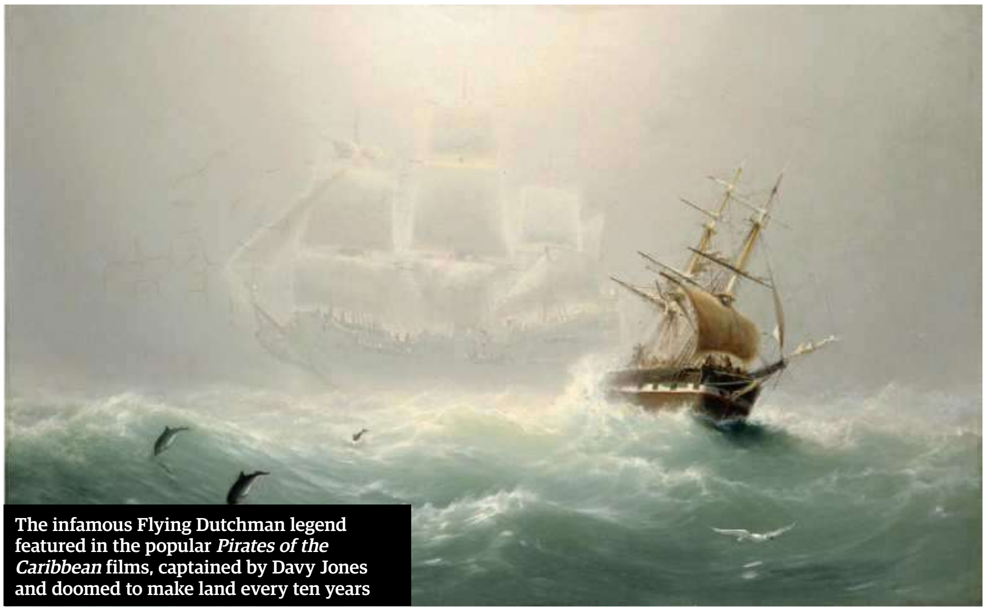
of the crew were all as they should be. The only thing of note was that the lifeboat was also missing. The enquiry that followed failed to determine what had happened; the missing crew were never found. Speculation ranged from mutiny to insurance fraud to piracy, but none of these theories proved satisfactory. It is hardly surprising that such mundane theories gave way to the more fantastic, such as paranormal intervention or falling prey to attack by a giant squid.

Like most good legends, that of the Mary Celeste quickly grew. Accordingly, it was reported that the table had been left with a meal just served, the food still almost warm when discovered, increasing the mystery and immediacy of the take. A lot of the later additions and factual inaccuracies can be traced to the story *J Habakuk Jephson's Statement* written by Arthur Conan Doyle.

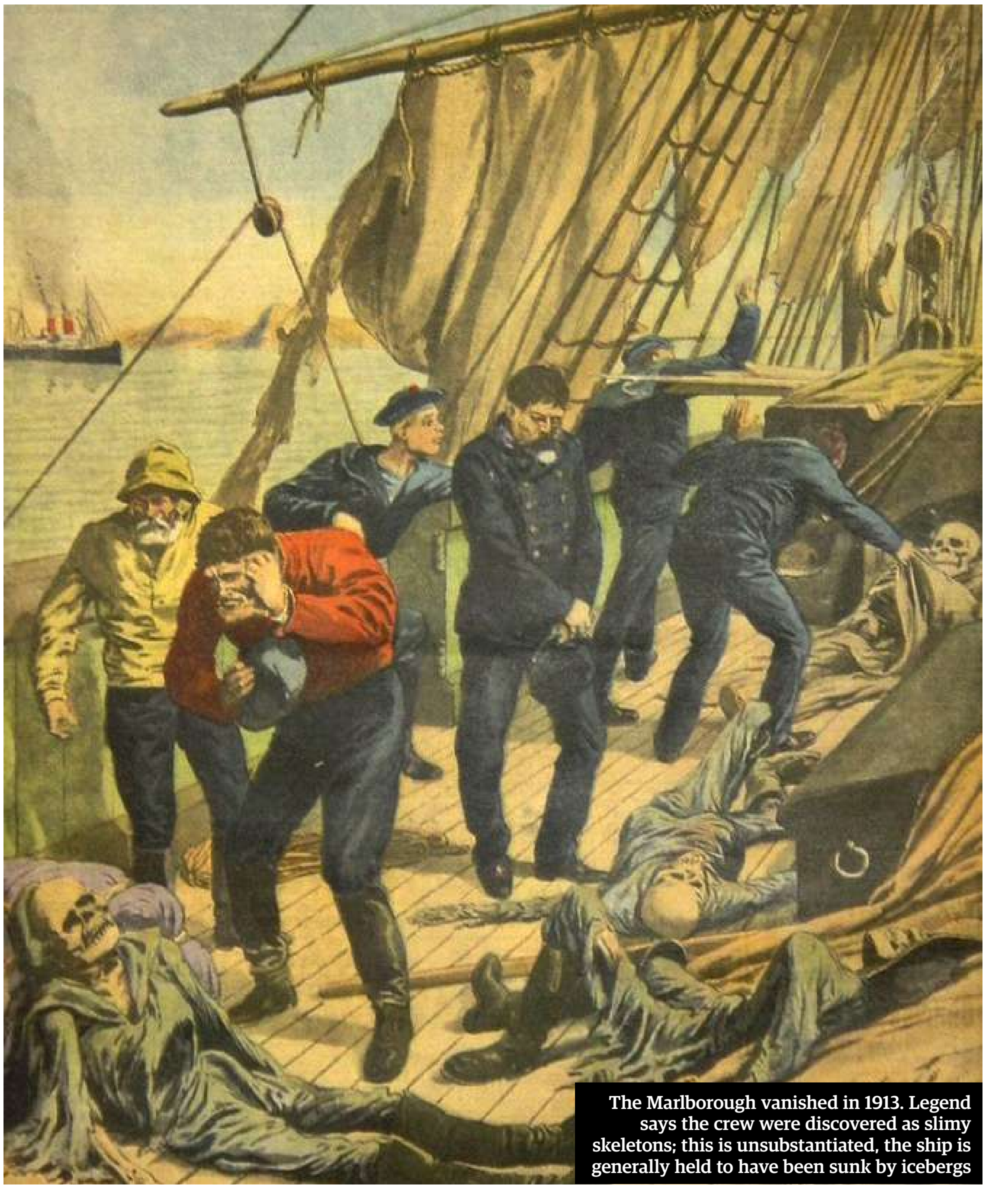
According to a similar legend, the Indonesian Ourang Medan met a terrible fate in 1947, though to this day it is unclear what happened, or even whether the ship existed in the first place. According to reports, a distress signal was picked up from the vessel, but when help arrived, it was to find everyone on board dead. Details such as the fact their faces were frozen in expressions of terror, and that all evidence vanished, as the Ourang Medan exploded and sank without trace before it could be taken to shore, only add to the mystery.

The Princess Augusta encountered disaster in the 18th century. The Augusta, a British vessel sailing to Philadelphia from Rotterdam, was beset with difficulties from the outset; a contaminated water supply leading to the death of half the crew, including the captain, and over 200 passengers. After yet more misfortune, the ship was wrecked during a snowstorm on 27 December 1738 outside Rhode Island. A main feature of this legend is the belief that a female passenger, named or unnamed, refused to leave the ship as it went down. Her sanity gone, she was left to her fate. Her screams were heard not only as the ship vanished beneath the waves, but can still be heard on occasion. The true fate of the Augusta is not entirely certain. However, according to legend, on the anniversary of the wreck, a ghostly light can be seen, known as the Palatine Light. This is the ghost of the Augusta – transformed into the Palatine by John Greenleaf Whittier in his poem of the same name.

Ghost ships, both old and new, continue to fascinate and terrify in equal measure, with many books and articles dedicated to the topic each year. Given the unabating fascination humankind has for the unknown and mysteries of all sorts – of which ghost ships are undoubtedly the finest example – they will continue to do so for many, many years to come.



The infamous Flying Dutchman legend featured in the popular *Pirates of the Caribbean* films, captained by Davy Jones and doomed to make land every ten years



The Marlborough vanished in 1913. Legend says the crew were discovered as slimy skeletons; this is unsubstantiated, the ship is generally held to have been sunk by icebergs

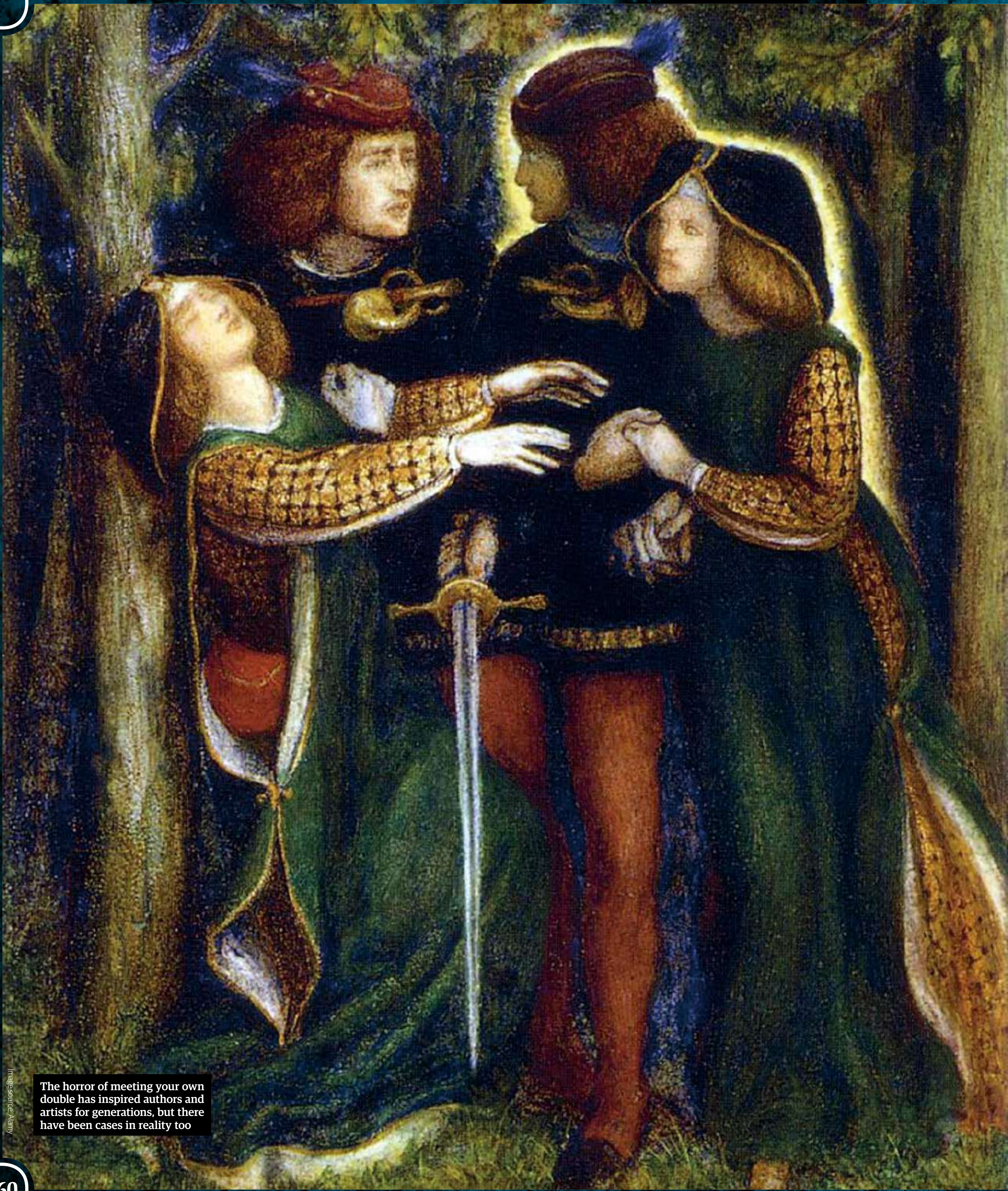


Image source: Alamy

The horror of meeting your own double has inspired authors and artists for generations, but there have been cases in reality too

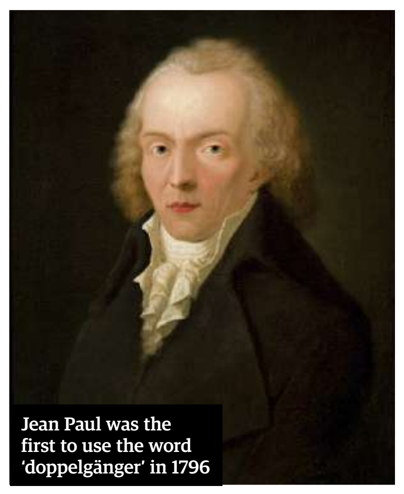
DOPPELGÄNGERS: DOUBLE TROUBLE

Stories of doppelgängers have been told for centuries, but are they supernatural beings, omens of disaster or simply a strange biological quirk?

Written by Catherine Curzon

The idea of the doppelgänger has fascinated folklorists and storytellers for centuries. Put simply, they are the double of another living person, but are entirely unrelated to them. In some versions of the legend the doppelgänger is of paranormal origin, sometimes even a harbinger of disaster, while in others they are the evil archetype. Regardless of what you believe, the idea of the doppelgänger is a chilling and strange one.

The very word doppelgänger is of German origin and literally translates as 'double-goer'. Its first documented use came in the form 'doppeltgänger' and appeared in Jean Paul's 1796 novel *Siebenkäs* to refer to the protagonist's alter ego. It entered use in the English-speaking world the following century, when it came to replace the word 'fetch' to describe the ghostly double of a living person.


Jean Paul was the first to use the word 'doppelgänger' in 1796

But while the word might only have been adopted relatively recently, the idea of a paranormal double is certainly far from new. It can be traced back as far as ancient Egypt, where the ka was a double of a living person, sharing not only an identical appearance, but the same memories too. A ka even altered the course of the Trojan War, when Helen's double appeared to Paris, causing him to change his battle plans.

Similar concepts can also be encountered in Scandinavian mythology, this time performing a living person's actions before they did. In Cornish and Norman folklore, however, the double is seem as a personification of death itself, heralding the forthcoming demise of the person whose appearance it shares.

While doppelgängers are familiar figures in fiction, there have been several well-documented accounts of people happening upon their own doubles in real life as well. Poet John Donne claimed to have seen his wife's doppelgänger on the evening that she delivered their stillborn daughter, while Johann Wolfgang von Goethe believed that he had passed his double on the road during a horseback excursion.

More recently, there have been numerous examples of people using social media to find their facial doubles, which they have termed 'twin strangers'. Although there is no supernatural element to these discoveries, they certainly count as doppelgängers in a more prosaic sense.

In Kansas, meanwhile, Richard Jones spent 17 years behind bars for a crime that he maintained he didn't commit. He was only freed when a man named Ricky Amos was arrested. Not only did he and Jones share a forename, but they were virtually identical, too.

THE DEVIL'S FOOTPRINTS

When mysterious footprints appeared in the snow one night, local people knew there could be only one culprit – the Devil had come to town

Written by Ben Gazur

In 1855, the Devil came to Devon. On the night of 8 February, during an unusually harsh winter, a snowstorm blanketed the countryside. People waking up the next morning in towns like Exmouth, Topsham, Dawlish and Teignmouth did not find this a beautiful sight, however. Why? Because a mysterious trail of footprints that closely resembled hoof-prints had appeared.

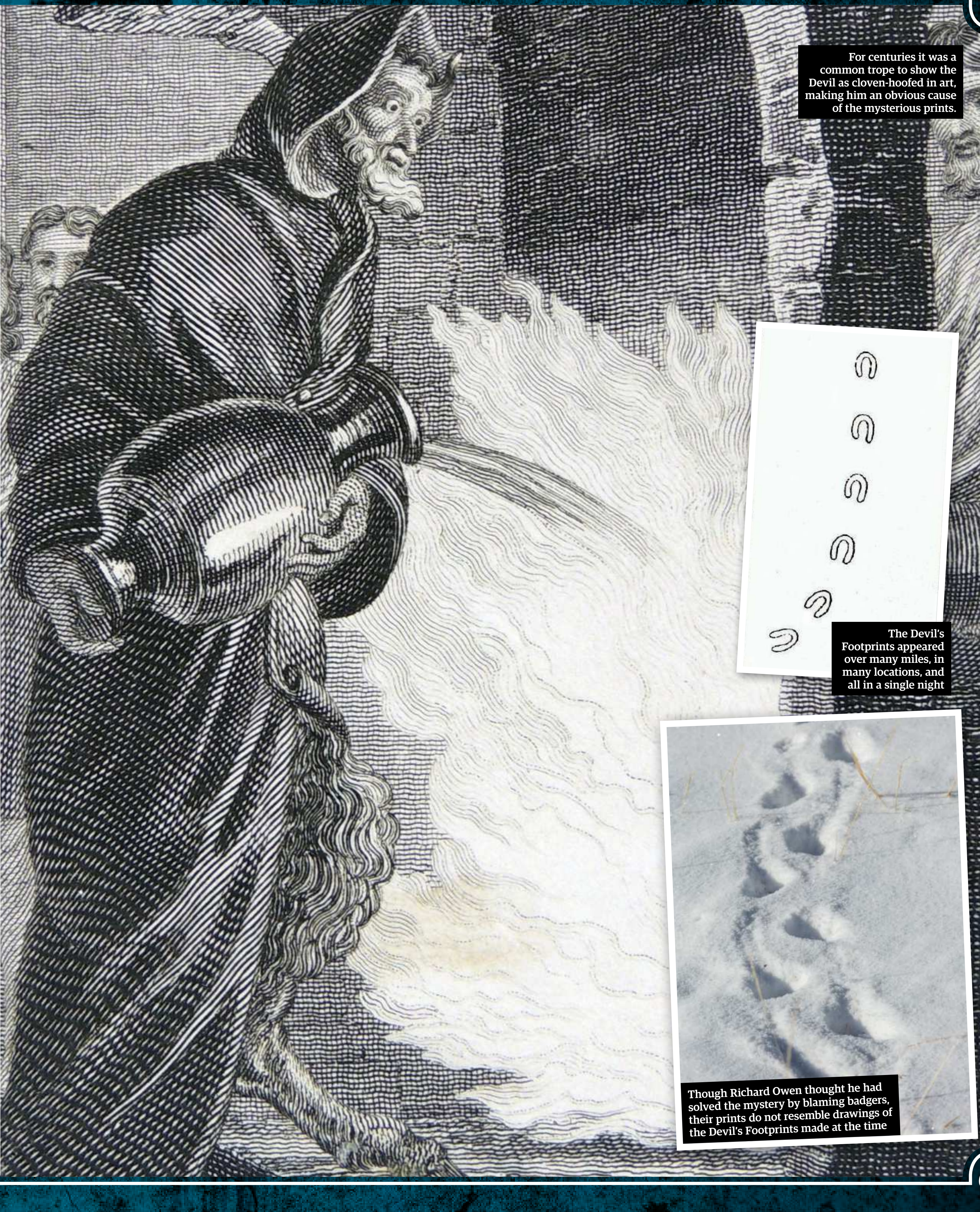
As the papers of the time reported it, these were "the footmarks of some strange and mysterious animal endowed with the power of ubiquity, as the footprints were to be seen in all kinds of unaccountable places - on the tops of houses and narrow walls, in gardens and court-yards, enclosed by high walls and pailings, as well in open fields." For many locals the explanation was obvious; these were the footprints of Devil himself.

The Times' correspondent remarked that these footprints looked as if they belonged to a biped rather than to some four-legged farm animal. Many of the tracks looked as if they had approached the doorsteps of homes before the mysterious visitor retreated. Consternation was so great that one vicar in the area drew attention to the footsteps in his sermon but suggested that instead of some supernatural event they were actually created by escaped kangaroos. Even he was not convinced by this explanation but later said that it was a useful exercise due to the terror villagers were experiencing, "dreading to go out after sunset… under the conviction that this was the Devil's work".

Some papers made merry with the event. One Exeter paper said: "We can't pretend to give an explanation of this 'mysterious affair', but all we know is that if this Devil has taken it into his head to have a steeple chase in Devon, he has manifested very peculiar taste in choosing such an inclement season for his sport."

Soon those with a more scientific leaning were keen to explain the mystery away. The famous professor Richard Owens claimed that several badgers were the culprits; others thought jumping mice might leave similar marks. One of the most novel explanations was that they were left by a balloon that was trailing its shackles along the ground. The most obvious cause, a hoofed or shod animal like a donkey, was thought unlikely due to the length of the tracks, the terrible weather and the prints' spacing.

The 1855 Devil's Footprints, therefore, remain unexplained. Intriguingly only five years earlier another track of Devil's Footprints appeared in the village of Rowley Regis - though of a quite different type. Here the footsteps were human shaped but appeared to have been burned into the ground by red-hot feet.



For centuries it was a common trope to show the Devil as cloven-hoofed in art, making him an obvious cause of the mysterious prints.

The Devil's Footprints appeared over many miles, in many locations, and all in a single night

Though Richard Owen thought he had solved the mystery by blaming badgers, their prints do not resemble drawings of the Devil's Footprints made at the time

Image source: Getty Images

SPECTRES AND SPOOKS

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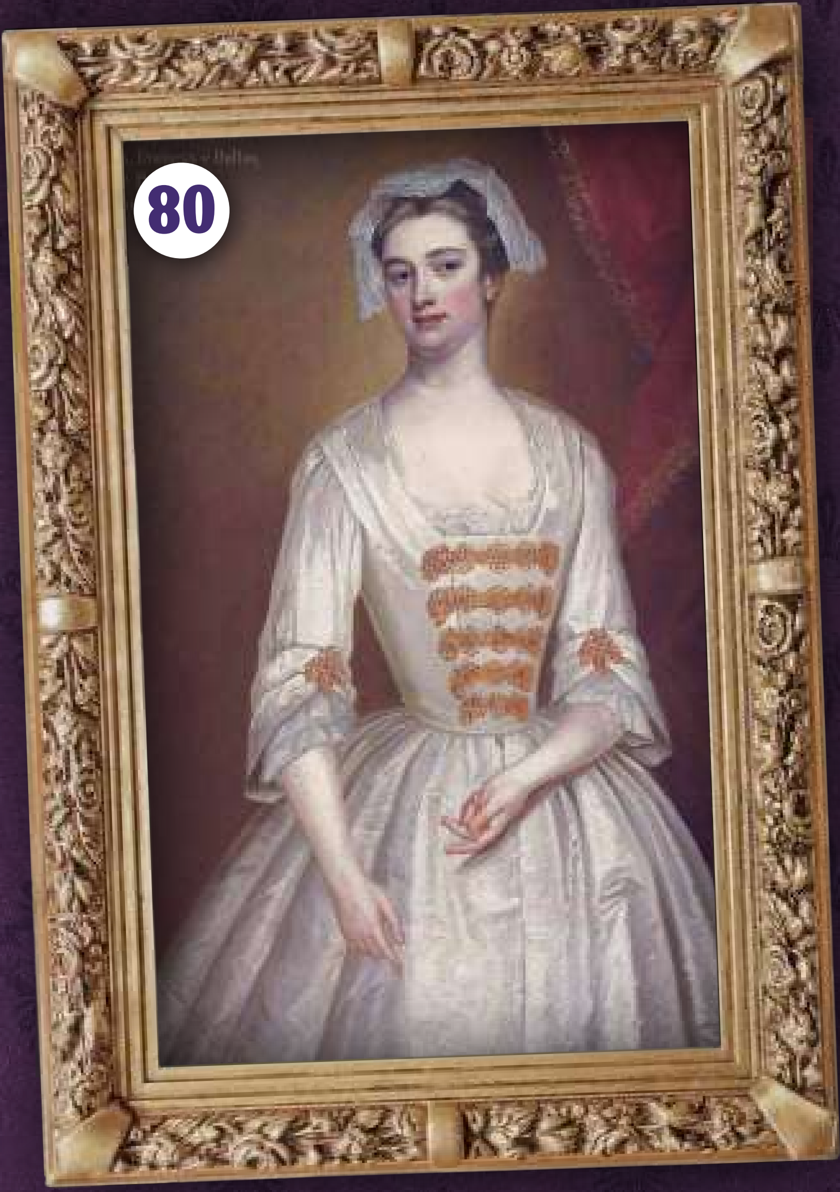
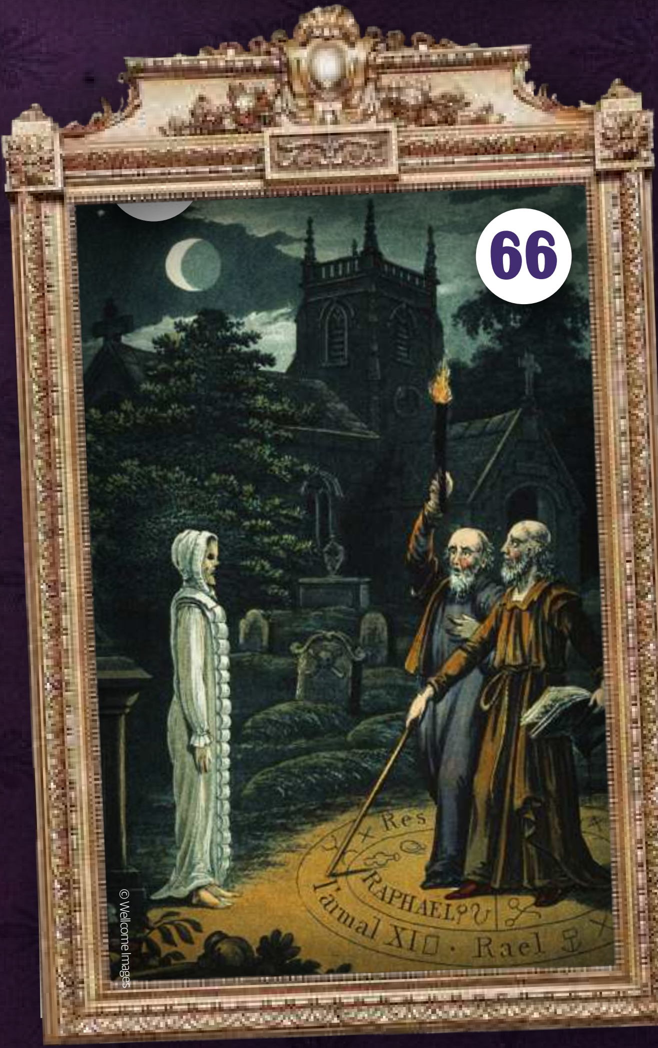
Image source: Getty Images

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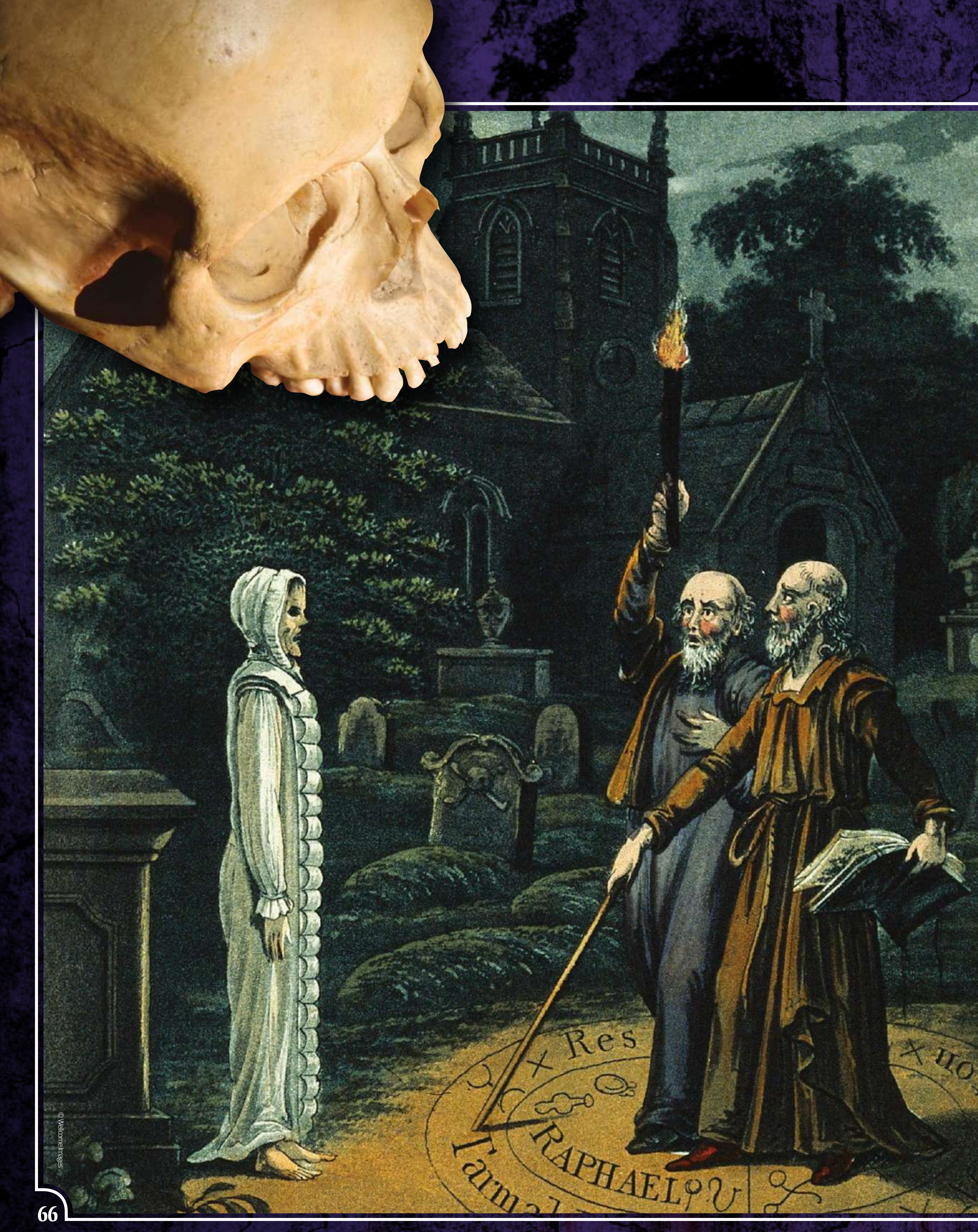
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THE UNDEAD

Revenants, zombies and ghosts are traditionally thought to wander after death in cultures worldwide

Written by Willow Winsham

Belief in the survival of the human soul after death, by logical extension, has given rise to a long and enduring belief that the dead, in various forms, can return to interact with the living. Either through their own power, in order to complete unfinished business, or at the behest of another, the restless undead, and how to deal with them, is a motif that occurs in the folklore of nearly all religions and cultures.

Incorporeal ghosts often return with a message or lesson for the living. Some speak to those who encounter them, while others are mute, and while some ghosts are obvious from the outset, others appear solid until a sign, such as lack of footprints, or vanishing into thin air, betrays them. Some ghosts are benign, while others are reported to be malevolent in nature. Often, a ghost returns to put right a matter left unfinished at the time of their death. With love believed to endure even beyond the grave, there are many tales of ghostly lovers returning to their love left behind, or the ghosts of those who have died in a lovers' pact. Many famous ghosts, such as various grey, green, or white ladies, are associated with specific locations, as are ghostly nuns, ill-fated monarchs and phantom armies.

The idea that the soul or spirit lives on after death is one of the most universal beliefs across the globe

Some legends feature incorporeal ghosts and spirits, while others feature reanimated corpses. Both are equally terrifying

A revenant - from the French for 'the returning', tends to describe a corpse that has been reanimated, often purposefully raised from death with the purpose of plaguing the living. In Norse mythology, there is the 'again walker' or aptgangr. The zombie, originating in Haitian folklore, is a reanimated corpse controlled by a bokor or witch; they have no will of their own. Although popular culture has frequently linked zombies with voodoo, the religion does not include them within its practices. Zombies can also appear in incorporeal form, the spirit selling for a pretty penny if captured and bottled. The word 'zombie' was first used in English in 1819, by the poet Robert Southey, in a history of Brazil. The Norse draugr are terrible, grave-dwelling creatures. Of immense strength, they can alter their size at will, and are believed to be guarding the treasure buried with them. Vengeful and vicious, they hunt down not only those who did them wrong in life, but are also known for violently attacking anyone who crosses their path.

The Haitian Zombie marks the origin of this now hugely popular revenant, reanimated from the dead to wreak havoc amongst the living

Ghouls, graveyard-dwelling demons from Arabian folklore, also have a penchant for human flesh. In some cases, a ghoul gruesomely takes the form of the most recent person it consumes. In other instances they manifest as beautiful women who lead their beguiled victims astray into the wastes in order to feed on them.

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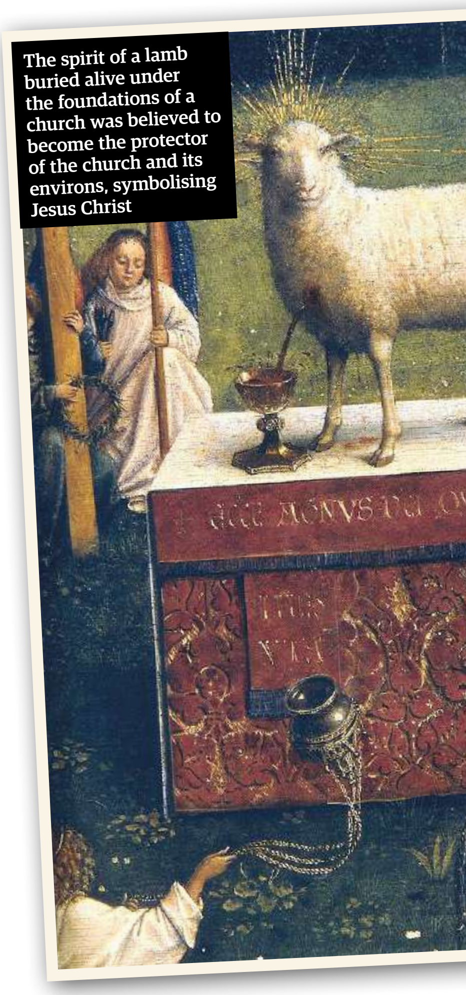
THE CHURCH GRIM



The spirit of a lamb buried alive under the foundations of a church was believed to become the protector of the church and its environs, symbolising Jesus Christ

Meant to be the protector of ancient churches, the grim can nonetheless instill fear even in the innocent

Written by Willow Winsham

The church grim is a curious sort of spirit, acting as guardian over a church and its churchyard. Present in English and Scandinavian folklore, the grim has a specific and crucial role: to protect its charge from the unruly and sacrilegious, or anyone who would seek to cause damage there. Witches, thieves, vandals, or the Devil himself, all could be kept out by the shadowy grim.

Where do grims originate? It is said that they are the spirit of an animal buried alive within the foundations of the church, or, in some cases, the spirit of the first person to be buried within the churchyard. Animals used as such 'foundation sacrifices' include horses, pigs, boars and dogs. Sightings of grims take many forms, but one of the most commonly sighted is a large, black dog. These spine-chilling creatures often appeared during inclement weather, the blustery, storm-ridden night adding to the terror of catching sight of this dark guardian.

The Yorkshire grim not only provided protection, but could also act as an ominous portent. It was believed that they could foretell the next death to occur, signalling the fact by ringing the church bells at the Witching Hour. Would a soul go to Heaven or Hell? If the priest looked upward he might receive an answer from the grim, watching proceedings from the church tower and nodding. The Danish kirkegrim or Swedish kykogrim had its work cut out. Not only protecting their churchyard from the usual vandalism, they could also be found doing valiant battle against the strand-varsler, the spirits of the dead lost at sea. Unable to rest, their bodies denied a proper burial, these spirits fought to enter the churchyard, the grim fighting to keep them out.

A less fearsome but equally powerful variation is that of the church lamb. Said to have been buried under the church foundations, the spirit lamb – meant to represent Christ – could be seen both in the church and in the yard outside; if the latter, it was thought to herald the death of a child. In Kroskjoberg, the grave-sow was witnessed in the churchyard and the streets, a foretelling of death to come. A Scottish variant is the idea that the spirit of the person buried last in the kirkyard was bound to protect it, but only until the next person to be interred takes over.

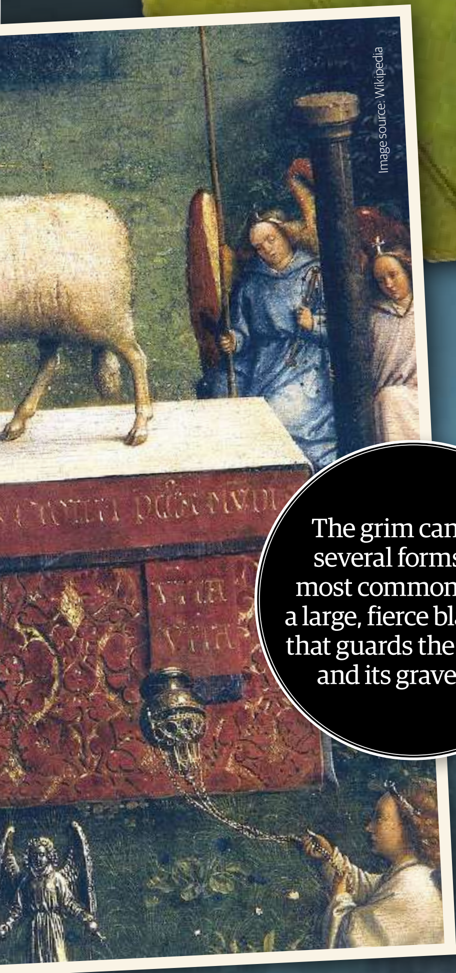


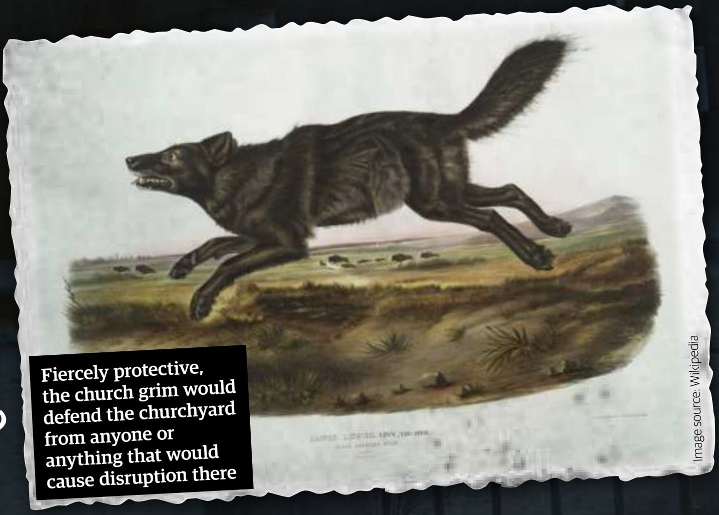
Image source: Wikipedia

The grim can take several forms; the most common one is a large, fierce black dog that guards the church and its graveyard

To witness the grim could foretell a death or other momentous events to come, and it was a brave soul indeed who ventured near

Image source: Getty Images

> “These spine-chilling creatures often appeared during inclement weather, the blustery, storm-ridden night adding to the terror of catching sight of it”



Fiercely protective, the church grim would defend the churchyard from anyone or anything that would cause disruption there

Image source: Wikipedia

All over the world, the phantom White Lady is a popular figure in folklore, terrifying and tragic in equal amounts

Image source: Getty

Female ghosts are often referred to by the dominant colour of the gown they wear: there is a rainbow of spectral women. Red has a unique meaning

The archetypal White Lady has become one of ghost lore's most famous phantoms

Image source: Wiki

FEMALE GHOSTS AND PHANTOMS

In the pantheon of ghosts and apparitions, female phantoms such as the White Lady, the banshee or even La Llorona occupy a particularly famous place

Written by Catherine Curzon

The spectral apparition of a White Lady, often the victim of some terrible tragedy or wrongdoing, has been an enduring concept in ghost lore all around the world for centuries. Usually these phantoms come complete with their own attached and tragic legend, more often than not based around the death of a loved one - perhaps a child or lover - or simply telling the story of a decent woman who was dealt a rough deal in life, She might be the victim of murder, or have taken her own life when subjected to an unwanted marriage or brutal treatment by a spouse. Unlike some archetypes, however, the White Lady isn't unique to a particular place. Instead her influence can be felt in cultures across the globe, each bringing with it its peculiar geographical quirks.

The concept of the White Lady first appeared in medieval legends, where the appearance of such a spectre was believed to foretell the death of the member of the witness' family, but each White Lady seems to come with her own particular spin on the legend.

The UK and the USA are practically crowded with White Ladies, such as the woman who searches tirelessly for her treasure in Northumberland's Blenkinsopp Castle, terrifying residents of the ancient home with her incessant and angry demands for their help. Whilst Blenkinsopp's ghost is searching for a lost fortune, the Ogmore Castle Lady in White protects a hidden cache of unimaginable riches. Legend has it that she will attack any who cross her or come near to discovering her buried treasure, with deadly talons.

White Lady archetypes do seem to have a particular affinity with castles and stately homes, perhaps because this is where they spent their often unhappy lives. Take for example the tragic White Lady of Porchester Castle, whose child fell from the battlements to their death. Unable to forgive herself for the accident, the bereaved

Image source: Getty Grape vein

The Lady in Red is an often good-natured female phantom who is usually associated with the murder of a prostitute or overly vain woman

Since the 1930s Resurrection Mary has haunted the highway beside her alleged gravesite in Justice, Illinois

and heartbroken mother flung herself after her child to certain death. Today, her ghostly form wanders the battlements in a search for her lost infant. Bereavement is a popular explanation for the appearance of White Ladies, and in Ireland's County Cork a woman's spectre has been spotted among the ruins of Charlesfort, endlessly walking walls that no longer exist. Legend has it that her husband returned to his sentry post the day after their riotous wedding and fell asleep on duty. He was executed for dereliction of duty and his heartbroken widow still mourns, centuries after both their deaths. Before the fort fell out of use soldiers often reported sightings of the phantom and today, with the site in ruins, she has wandered further afield and been spotted on the streets of the nearby town of Kinsale.

Not all White Ladies are mourning a loved one. Some were the victims of accidents and are joined in their haunting by a faithful companion. A White Lady and her ghostly dog stroll through the grounds of Durham's Harperley Hall, where they were struck by a carriage and killed whilst out for a walk. These peaceful spirits are a far cry from the White Lady of Beeford, Yorkshire, who darts across a busy road in front of terrified drivers. If rumours are to be believed, she has even been to blame for a number of serious accidents.

Not to be outdone, America's highways have been terrorised by their own ladies in white, and they occasional stray into the archetype of the phantom hitchhiker too. In Altoona, Pennsylvania, the White Lady of Wopsy was killed alongside her husband in a highway crash. Today she searches for him still, endlessly wandering along the road in a manifestation so clear that innocent motorists have picked up from time to time, believing her to be a hitchhiker. Needless to say, when they reach their destination their passenger is nowhere to be seen.

"American White Ladies and the tragedies that supposedly created their legends have been reported for centuries"

On Highway 22 through Louisiana, meanwhile, the Silk Lady howls with terrifying laughter at the point where she was thrown from her horse and killed instantly. Perhaps most infamous of all roadside phantoms is Resurrection Mary, who is believed to haunt Archer Avenue alongside Resurrection Cemetery in Justice, Illinois. Dressed in a white party frock, Mary is a far cry from the traditional White Lady, and she's keen to hitch a lift to a dance that finished decades ago. When hapless drivers stop and offer Mary a lift, she rides with them in silence for a while before vanishing from their car. Legend has it that Mary was killed by a hit-and-run driver as she walked home from a dancehall. She has been appearing to motorists since the 1930s and efforts have been made to connect her to one of the people who are buried in Resurrection Cemetery.

Though Resurrection Mary is a modern sort of spectre, American White Ladies and the tragedies that supposedly created their legends have been reported for centuries. On the veranda of her former home in Virginia, the White Lady of Avenal anxiously and fruitlessly awaits the return of her husband, who died in the Civil War. She has a kindred spirit – in every sense – in Rochester, New York, where a bereaved mother who died of a broken heart endlessly searches for her murdered daughter. The wedding-dress clad woman who drifts through Tolamarto cemetery in St Augustine, Florida, meanwhile, never had a chance to have a child. She dropped dead on her way to the altar and her sprit can still be seen trying to reach the chapel and her groom. With many centuries of history and folklore to call upon, Europe's White Ladies are often somewhat more traditional than Resurrection Mary in her 20th century dancing shoes. Take for instance the White Lady of Haapsalu Castle in Estonia. In life she snuck into the castle in the guise of a choirboy in order to be with her lover, a clergyman. When she was discovered, she was walled up alive as punishment and left to perish. To this day, whenever a full August Moon illuminates the windows, she can be glimpsed peering through the glass, hoping to be reunited with her lost love. The White Lady of Schloss Aussel in Germany was once a princess, married to a brutal prince. When he caught her in the arms of her true love, he murdered his rival and had his wife walled up with enough food and water to last until he returned from a military engagement. Instead he was killed on the battlefield. With nobody aware of his wife's horrible fate, the house was closed up and she perished in her prison.

Now and then, White Ladies even intervene to save others from a similar fate or simply to take care of them. The White Lady of Mdina, in Malta, is the spirit of a bride who was murdered by her jealous lover. She appears to children to wish them goodnight, and intervenes when couples are ill-matched, telling them to find new, more deserving lovers.

One of the most fascinating elements of the White Lady archetype is the fact that they have become part of popular consciousness in many countries. In the Philippines, White Ladies are a familiar character in childhood morality tales, often described as having long black hair that contrasts with their deathly pale skin. This element is common to Thai White Lady stories too, in which vengeful spirits of ladies in white terrorise the living.

Japan's Yuki-onna has become a familiar figure thanks to her recent multiple appearances in horror movies. She too is recognisable from her long black hair, porcelain skin and white dress, and she originated in folktales of a mysterious and seductive female snow-spirit whose skin was ice cold, and was believed to bring tragedy to anyone who encountered her. Some believe that she is the spirit of winter itself, whilst other versions of the legend claim that she is the vengeful ghost of a murdered woman, who is as deadly as she is enchanting. Yuki-onna chills her victims with her ice breath and pushes them from cliff edges. Sometimes she simply freezes them to death where they stand. Like their East Asian counterparts, White Ladies in the Netherlands are not to be trifled with. Known as 'vrouwen in wit', these malevolent creature abduct children, much like fairies in other folklore. They sometimes appear as mists and are a close relative of the banshee, bringing catastrophe to those they haunt. Catastrophe is heralded by the Maidens of Uley too, who haunt the wilderness of Irkutsk Oblast in Russia. The legend tells that a young woman named Bulzhuuhai Duuhai committed suicide after being forced to marry a brutish man whom she didn't love. After her death she joined the Maidens of Uley, ghosts of ill-treated maidens who sought vengeance. They appeared to grooms-to-be and tempted them with their beauty, before dragging their souls down to the underworld.

In Europe, female ghosts are often associated with stately homes and castles, and are often said to wander the grounds , halls, and battlements

LA LLORONA OF MEXICO

The White Lady from Mexico was rejected from heaven and sent to find her son's souls

According to legend, La Llorona was a poor but beautiful woman who was swept off her feet by a dashing and wealthy nobleman. As the years passed and the couple became the parents of two sons, the nobleman neglected his wife and was often absent. When he came home, he spent all his time with his children and behaved as though his wife didn't exist.

One day, the nobleman turned his back on his aging wife in favour of a younger woman. Devastated and abandoned, his wife took her sons down to the river and drowned them. When her husband learned what she had done, he demanded that she retrieve their bodies, but the current had already swept them away. Stricken by guilt, she walked into the water and drowned, but even in the next world her torment only increased. When La Llorona's spirit reached heaven she was denied entry and told to return to Earth and find the souls of her dead children. Unable to trace them, La Llorona is doomed to walk the Earth, and she fills her time by abducting and drowning other children just as she murdered her own.

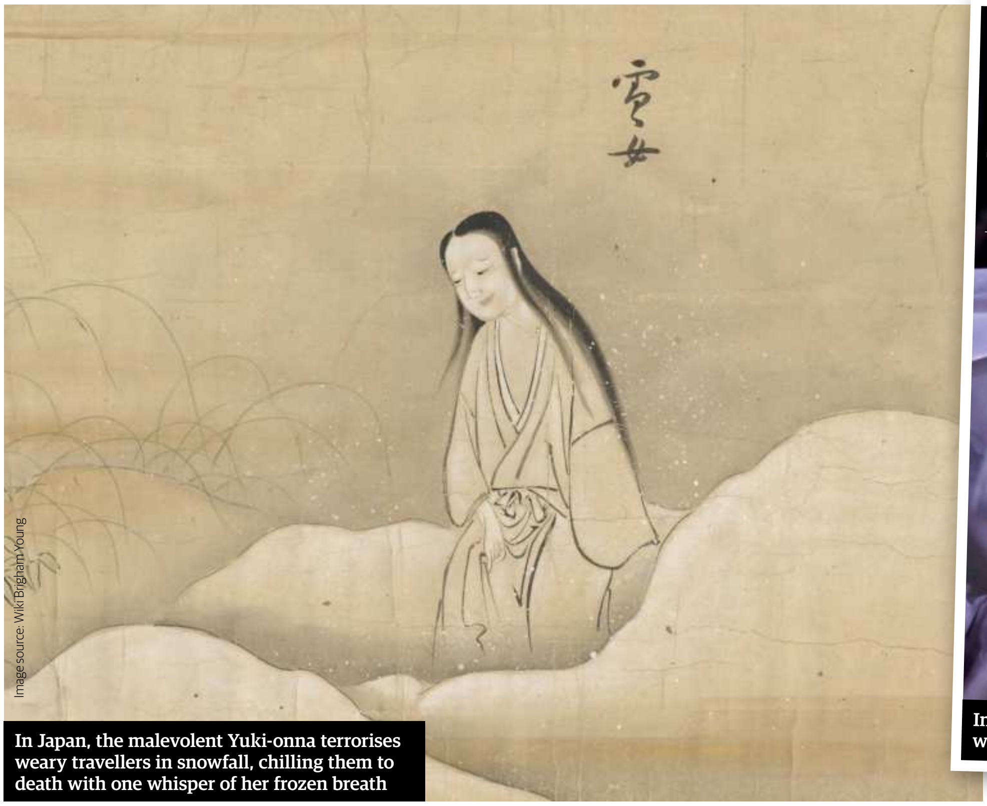


Image source: Wiki Brigham Young

In Japan, the malevolent Yuki-onna terrorises weary travellers in snowfall, chilling them to death with one whisper of her frozen breath

Image source: EFE News Agency / Alamy

In Mexico, the weeping figure of La Llorona is condemned to wander the Earth as punishment for drowning her children

THE WHITE LADY OF NEWSTEAD

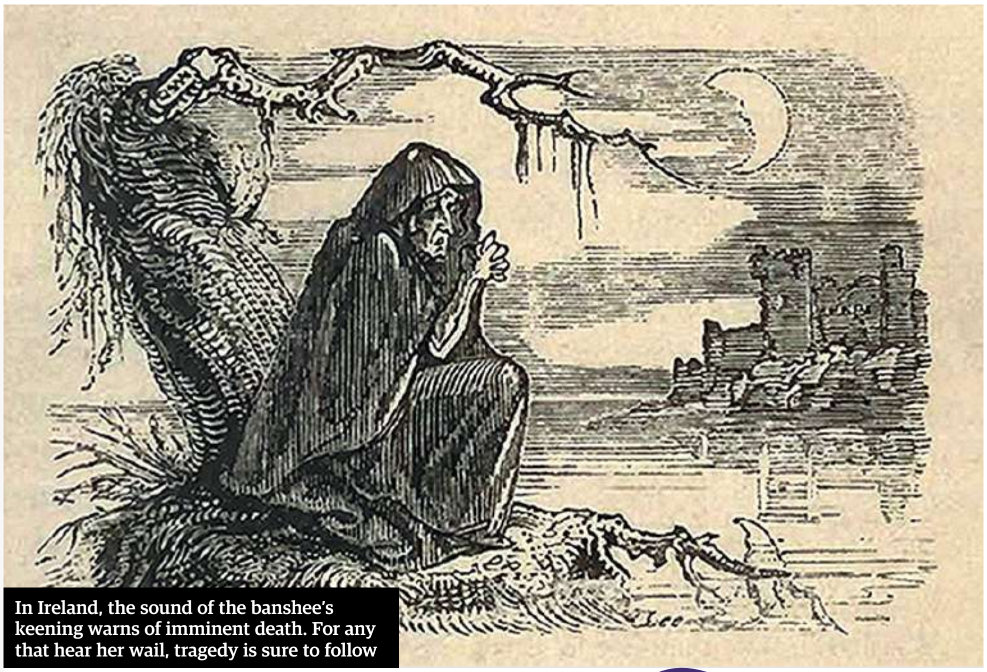
When Lord Byron tired of life at Newstead Abbey, he sold it to Thomas Wildman, a childhood friend. When Wildman heard that a local deaf and mute girl named Sophie Hyatt was a huge fan of the poet, he invited her to visit Newstead as often as she wished. He even asked if she would care for a dog that Byron had left behind, and the delighted Sophie accepted.

Sophie found a haven at Newstead and became a familiar sight in her white gown. She relied on a rich relative for her income and when he died, she decided to contact her only surviving family in America and ask for help. She set off for Nottingham, leaving a note at the Abbey to tell the Wildmans what she was planning.

When they read her note, the family decided that they would ask Sophie to live with them at Newstead. They sent a servant to Nottingham to bring her home, but he arrived to find that Sophie had been hit by a drayman's cart and killed instantly. Yet her spirit lived on and to this day Sophie still strolls through her beloved garden at Newstead Abbey, where she now has the honour of her very own White Lady's Walk.

The ghost of a shy young lady named Sophie walks the gardens of Newstead Abbey, her beloved sanctuary in life

Image source: Wiki Shelley Rodrigo



In Ireland, the sound of the banshee's keening warns of imminent death. For any that hear her wail, tragedy is sure to follow

> "Not every ghost wears white, of course, and the Lady in Red is said to be the ghost of a prostitute or murdered good-time-girl, or simply a woman who was excessively vain"

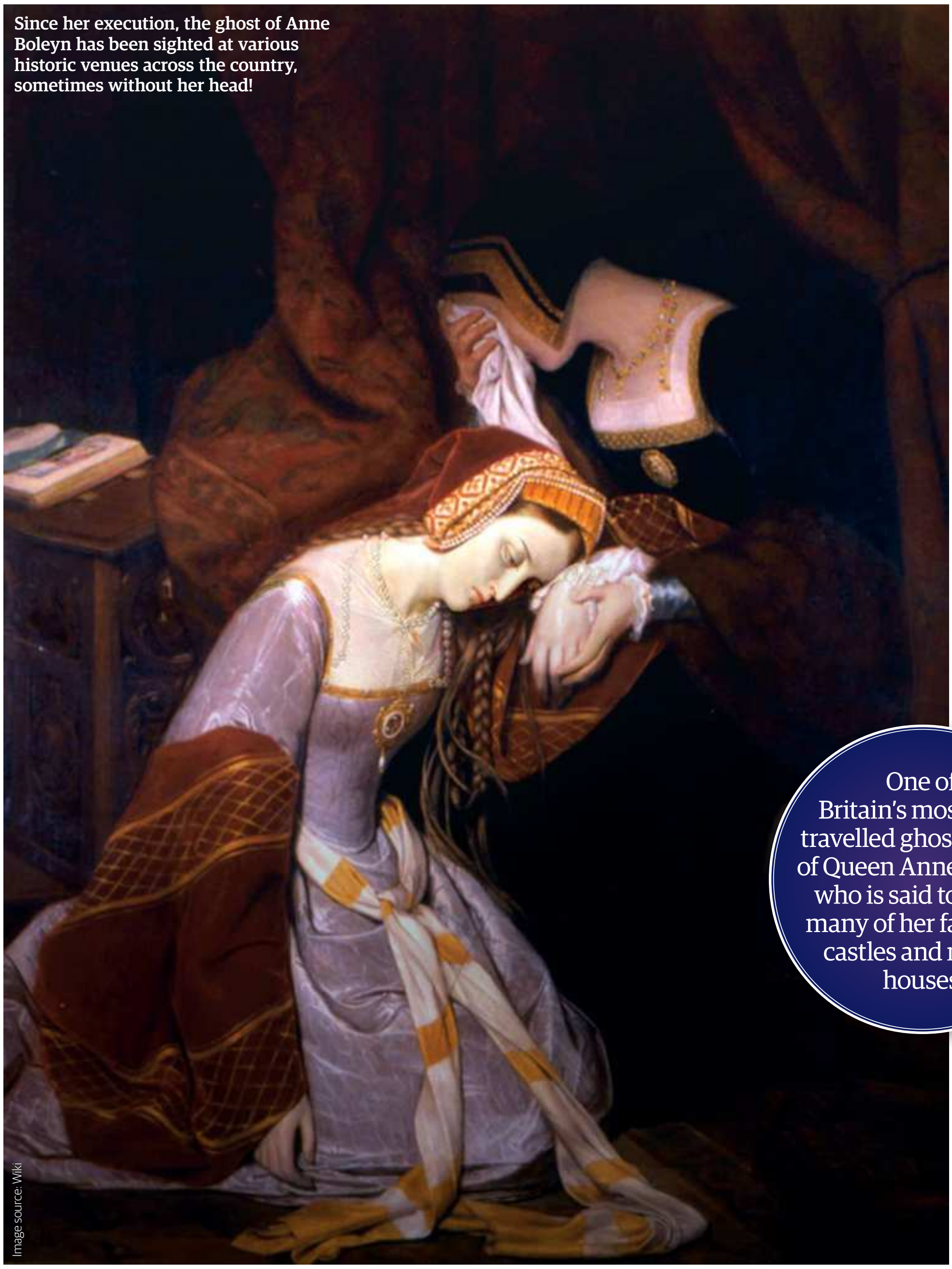
Yet if some spirits were reputed to carry off the souls of their victims, others had a less hands-on approach when it came to haunting. One of these is the banshee, an Irish spirit - often a fairy - recognisable by her bloodshot eyes and slight build, but most commonly identified by her bloodcurdling wail. Her keening cry rings out at night and foretells of a death in the family of those who hear her. Some legends claim that each of the ancient Milesian families of Ireland have their own familial banshee, whilst others believe that any unfortunate can hear a banshee's wail. Common to all is the belief that her cry portends tragedy. In Scotland, the banshee has her own regional variant. She is the Washer at the Ford, or bean-nighe, traditionally believed to be the spirit of a woman who died in childhood. In some versions of the story the Washer has enormous breasts, which she throws back over her shoulders to keep them out of her way as she works. Should someone spot her and take hold of her breast, she will tell him the secrets of his heart's desire. More often than not, however, the woman is tirelessly scrubbing bloodstains from a piece of armour or clothing, and those who own the garments are doomed to die soon after.

Not every ghost wears white, of course, and the Lady in Red is said to be the ghost of a prostitute or murdered good-time-girl, or simply a woman who was excessively vain. Though White Ladies are often mournful, their red counterpart is the opposite. Friendly and bright, she is often associated with an entertainment venue or other public place. Red Ladies are particularly common to the United States, and the Red Lady of Huntingdon College, a student who always wore red, even inspired a sporting event in her name.

Hotels are popular venues for Red Ladies, and Charleston's former Planter's Hotel hosts the ghost of prostitute Nettie Dickerson, who was struck by lightning whilst wearing her distinctive gown. In Alabama, another Lady in Red haunts Rawls Hotel, where she was flung from a balcony to her death. From Chicago to San Francisco and beyond, hotels bristle with the red-clad phantoms of fun-loving women who met a violent end.

North of the border, Toronto's abandoned Lower Bay transit station has a resident eyeless Lady in Red, who used to terrify passengers when she glided above the platform. Some transit workers were so petrified that they refused to work in the station's environs. Red Ladies have spread terror across the Atlantic too, such as Leap Castle's Lady in Red who wanders the corridors clutching a dagger, searching for the man who killed her.

In Brazil, meanwhile, the Dama Branca is the spirit of a young woman who died a violent death - often as a victim of an honour killing - or perished in childbirth. She glides silently past terrified witnesses and, on rare occasions, shares with them the terrible tale of her death. Perhaps a more famous South American spirit, however, is La Llorona, the Weeping Woman, of Mexican folklore. Condemned to forever walk the Earth and drown innocent children as punishment



Since her execution, the ghost of Anne Boleyn has been sighted at various historic venues across the country, sometimes without her head!

Image source: Wiki

for the murder of her own sons, La Llorona is a popular bogeyman in Mexico. Children are warned to obey their parents lest she carry them away to a watery grave.

Though the origins of many Ladies in White are lost to history, one phantom whose life has been very well-documented is that of Anne Boleyn, the unfortunate second wife of King Henry VIII, who met her death on the Tower of London scaffold. Since her execution in 1536 Anne has been busier than ever. Her ghost frequently pops up at castles and stately homes all over the country, sometimes with her head and sometimes without it.

Every year on the anniversary of her death, Anne is said to return to Blickling Hall, which stands on the spot where the ill-fated queen was born. She rides in a carriage pulled by headless horses, the heads of her coachman and footmen likewise nowhere to be seen. Within the carriage sits Anne, her severed cranium sitting neatly in her lap. The carriage reaches the door of Blickling Hall then vanishes into thin air.

When Anne isn't visiting her birthplace at Blickling Hall, she keeps herself busy with appearances at other illustrious addresses. One such place is Marwell Hall where Henry VIII romanced Anne's successor, Jane Seymour, whilst Anne languished in the Tower of London, awaiting her date with the executioner. Local legend tells that Henry and Jane were even secretly married at the Hampshire House, before their official wedding ceremony took place. Today Anne periodically returns to Marwell Hall and wanders Yewtree Walk in the grounds, searching for the husband who betrayed her. She is thought to walk the hallways at Windsor Castle too, and regularly appears in what has become known as Anne Boleyn's window in the Dean's Cloisters.

It's probably not surprising that one of Anne's favourite haunts is the Tower of London, the place where she met her death. Perhaps the most famous sighting of the unfortunate woman was made by General Dundas in 1864, who saw a woman in white approach an unsuspecting courtyard guard. The guard ordered her to halt, yet the woman kept coming until he tried to push her back. Instead, he ran right through her. The terrified guard fainted clean away and was accused by superiors of abandoning his post. General Dundas testified at the guard's trial that he too had seen the apparition in the courtyard, and the unfortunate man was acquitted.

Yet despite her unhappy life and violent death, Anne Boleyn's visitations aren't always related to tragedy. In fact, a Christmastime visit to Hever Castle has become one of her regular appearances. Anne was courted by Henry VIII during at stay at the Kent castle, during one of the happiest times of her life. During her lifetime Anne loved the festive season, so perhaps it shouldn't be any surprise that she still returns to one of her favourite places to celebrate her most loved time of year. It's highly unusual for an apparently identifiable ghost to be sighted in so many different locations, but Anne Boleyn's life was filled with drama and had no shortage of tragedies, so it's hardly surprising that the vivacious queen's diary is still busy, even in death.

> One of Britain's most well-travelled ghosts is that of Queen Anne Boleyn, who is said to haunt many of her favourite castles and manor houses

Across the globe, from England to Japan, Mexico to Germany and beyond, the archetypal figures of the White Lady and her fun-loving counterpart, the Lady in Red, are inextricably woven with folk stories of banshees, bean-nighe and other creatures of legend. They are used to frighten errant children or give travellers on lonely roads something to think about, and they are often told alongside tales of tragedies that have been long forgotten by all but the phantoms who are forever doomed to retrace the steps that led them to disaster. Some of these stories are ancient, some more recent, and now and then, as in the case of cases such as Resurrection Mary, they seem almost contemporary. Though the ghostly apparition of Anne Boleyn roams ancient castles and the banshee haunts the wilderness, other Ladies in White stand boldly at the side of busy roads and wait for a lift from an unsuspecting driver. The legend of the White Lady archetype have become an important part not just of ghostlore, but of global culture.

THE BLACK LADY OF BRADLEY WOODS

This melancholy wraith has often been glimpsed, floating between the trees of Bradley Woods, England

Written by Joanna Elphick

Whilst sightings of supernatural entities are usually terrifying events, those who have spotted the Black Lady are more often left saddened. Hers is a heartbreaking tale and, although a few details have altered over the years, the basic premise remains the same.

Her name has always been a mystery, but she clearly represents the many women left to fend for themselves during times of war. This particular story is set during the War of the Roses, somewhere between 1455 and 1485, although other versions speak of the Barons' Wars in the 13th century. A hard-working woodsman and his beautiful young bride rented a cottage deep in the woods, outside the village of Bradley in Lincolnshire, England. Theirs was an idyllic life and it wasn't long before the couple were blessed with a healthy baby boy, but just as they settled into a contented family routine, disaster struck. The doting husband was called to fight and, having kissed his infant child goodbye, he was forced to leave his wife to look after herself and their child.

Months went by without word from the woodsman, and so the lady took to carrying her baby to the edge of the woods to wait for his return. Unbeknownst to her, the enemy had crossed the River Humber and were trekking through the trees when they came across the lone woman. Three horsemen leapt upon her,

The mournful, tear-stained phantom of the Black Lady hides in the shadows of the wood and walks through the long grass of the meadow

Image source: Getty Images

throwing her to the ground and violently raping her. Having ravished her, they rode away, taking her screaming son with them. At first light, the distraught mother regained consciousness and started searching for her baby, but the child was nowhere to be seen. Sheer loneliness and not knowing the fate of either her husband or son eventually drove her to despair, and she died of a broken heart.

Not long after, her mournful spirit was spotted drifting through the trees, and continues to be spotted to this day. Over the years her ghostly presence has been used as a means of frightening naughty children into behaving but, although there have been many sightings of the Black Lady, there are no records of her offering any harm to those who have crossed her path.

It is said that, should you wish to see her for yourself, all you have to do is yell "Black Lady, Black Lady, I've stolen your baby!" and the heartbroken woman will appear.

> "Sheer loneliness and not knowing the fate of her husband or son drove her to despair, and she died of a broken heart"

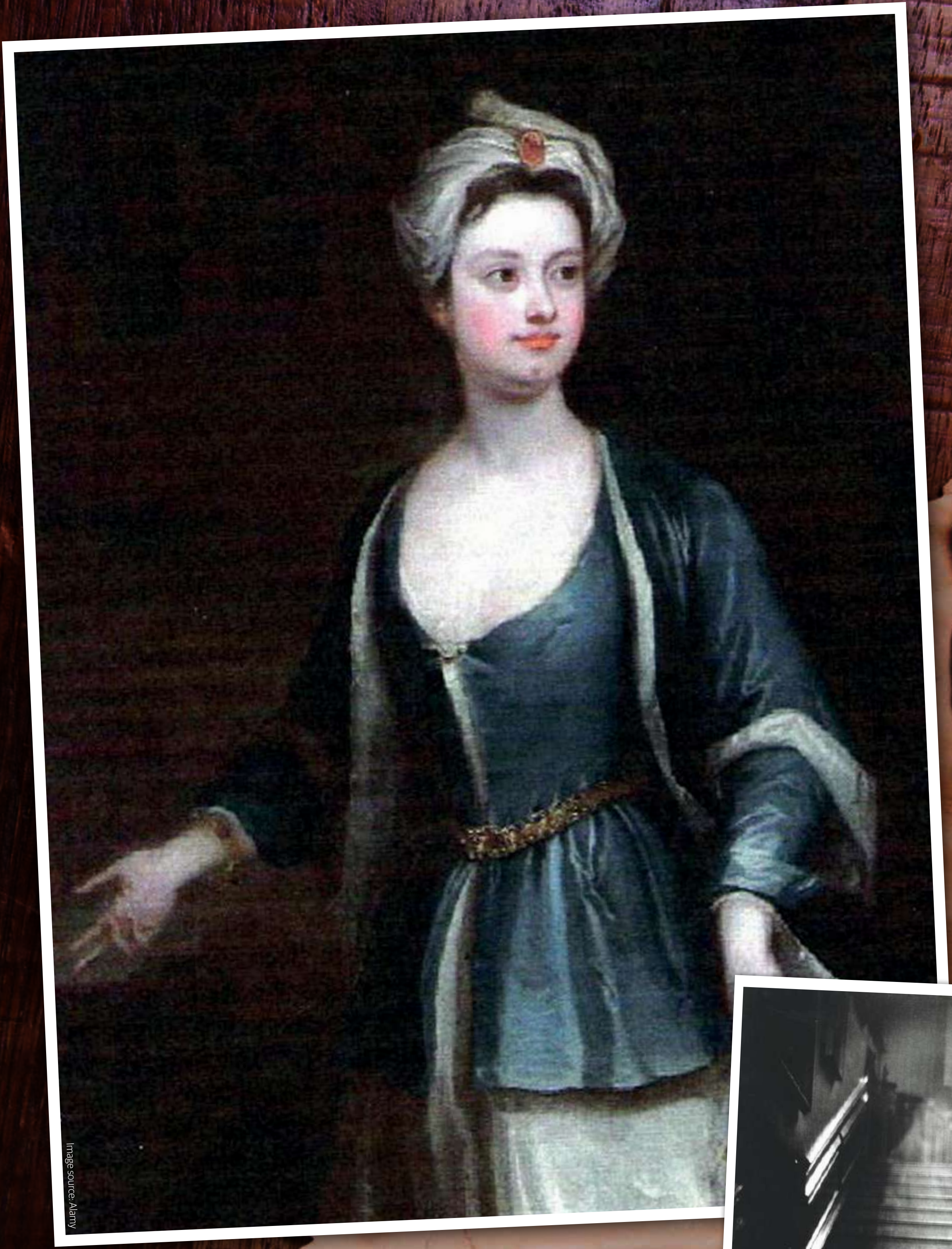


Image source: Alamy

THE BROWN LADY OF RAYNHAM HALL

When photographers caught her image on camera in 1936, the Brown Lady of Raynham Hall became an instant supernatural icon

Written by Joanna Elphick

Although some have claimed that the famous photograph of a ghostly entity floating down the stairs of Raynham Hall is nothing more than a cunning fake, many more, including the renowned ghost hunter Harry Price, believe it to be the genuine article. Over the years the image has been reproduced in hundreds of books on the paranormal, but who is this luminary spectre and what is her story?

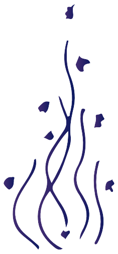
It is thought that the Brown Lady, so-called because of her chocolate-coloured brocade dress, is in fact the ghost of Lady Dorothy Walpole, the beautiful fun-loving second wife of Charles 'Turnip' Townsend. Despite having 11 children, it was an unhappy marriage, with Dorothy spending too much money on frocks and Charles unleashing his violent temper on a whim. When he discovered that his wife had had an affair with Lord Wharton before their marriage, Townsend locked his wife away, depriving her of any communication with her beloved children.

Her death remains somewhat of a mystery for, whilst she officially died of smallpox, many claimed at the time that she had been pushed down the stairs, whilst others whispered that she had been starved to death. In truth, she most likely died of a broken heart, longing for her babies.

Either way, shortly after her death, her ghost was spotted drifting along the landing and down the great staircase by servants and visitors alike. Others claimed to have seen her standing beneath her portrait in one of the bedrooms. It seemed that, contrary to her gentle nature in life, in death, Dorothy's spirit was cruel and malevolent, resulting in the rapid departure of many members of staff. No more the beautiful mistress of the house, this hideous entity stared out blankly with dark hollow sockets rather than her previous sparkling eyes.

Various famous guests, including King George IV, who refused to stay in 'this accursed house' ever again, and well-known author Captain Marryat, who fired a gun point-blank into her ghostly face, had terrifying encounters with her, but it wasn't until she was photographed by Captain Provand and Indra Shira that she became a true supernatural celebrity.

Today, Raynham Hall continues to be troubled by her restless spirit maniacally searching for her children. The sound of whispers in the picture gallery and the rustling of silk skirts on the main staircase still startle guests, whilst weighty chairs are known to move by themselves.



THE GREY LADY OF SPRING WOOD

This seemingly gentle, shimmering, musical ghost haunts the woodland garden of one of her former homes

Written by April Madden

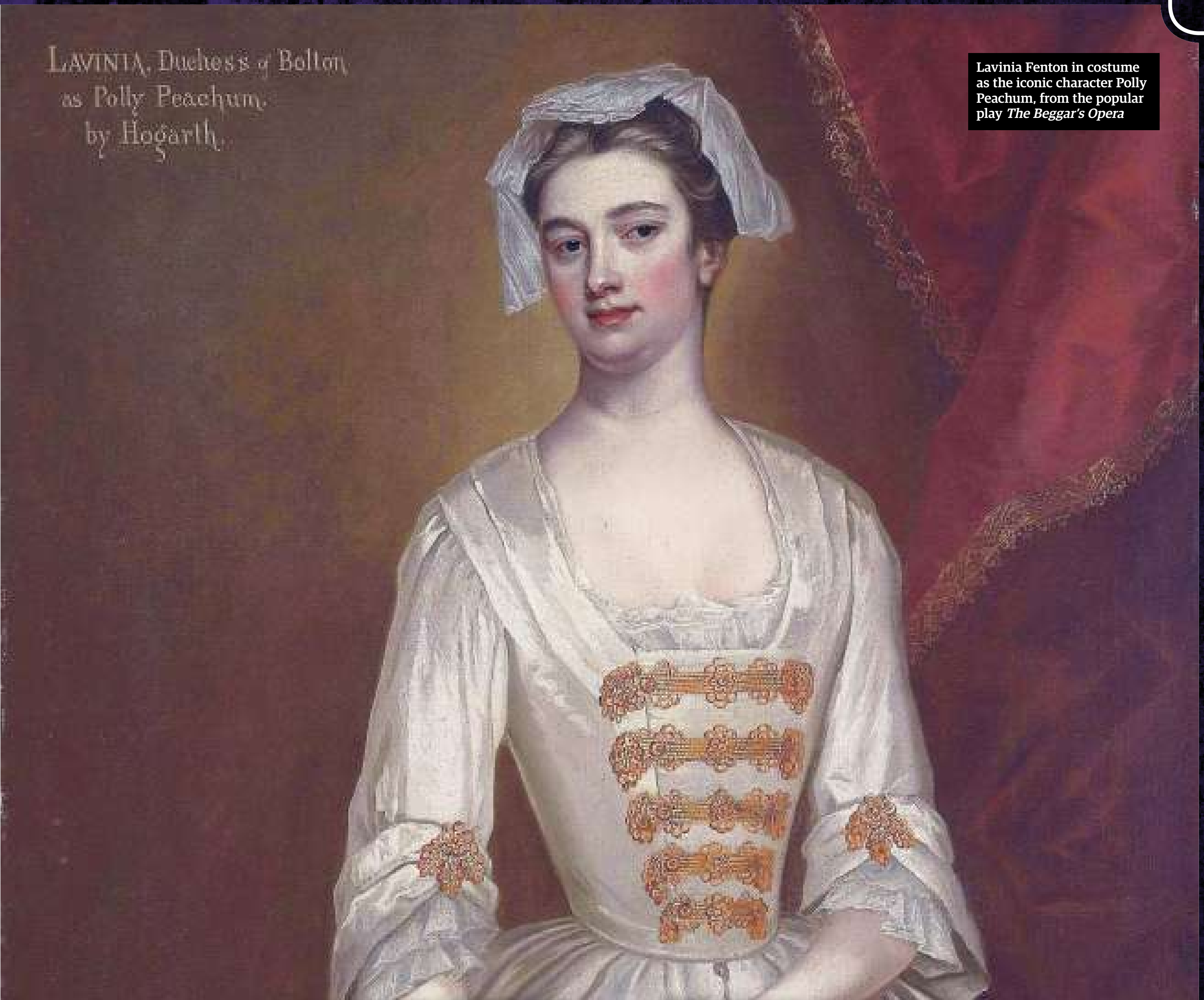
The third Duke of Bolton, Charles Powlett, had an eye for the ladies. Unfortunately, his father forced him into an unhappy marriage with Lady Anne Vaughan, a philanthropically inclined woman who was one of the first subscribers to the fund to set up London's Foundling Hospital for orphaned children. Her husband was not as charitably minded; he used his wife's income to fund a lavish and hedonistic lifestyle. Embarrassed, Lady Anne retreated from public life. As soon as Powlett inherited his father's estates and title, the couple separated.

In 1728 Charles Powlett began an affair with the actress Lavinia Fenton, best known for her starring role as heroine Polly Peachum in satirical musical play and "Newgate pastoral" *The Beggar's Opera*, about the criminal underworld of 18th century London. Fenton was the first to play the iconic character and it stuck with her for the rest of her life - and beyond. Powlett moved his famous mistress into Westcombe Manor in Blackheath, London; the site of her former home is now known as Peachum Road in honour of her most famous role.

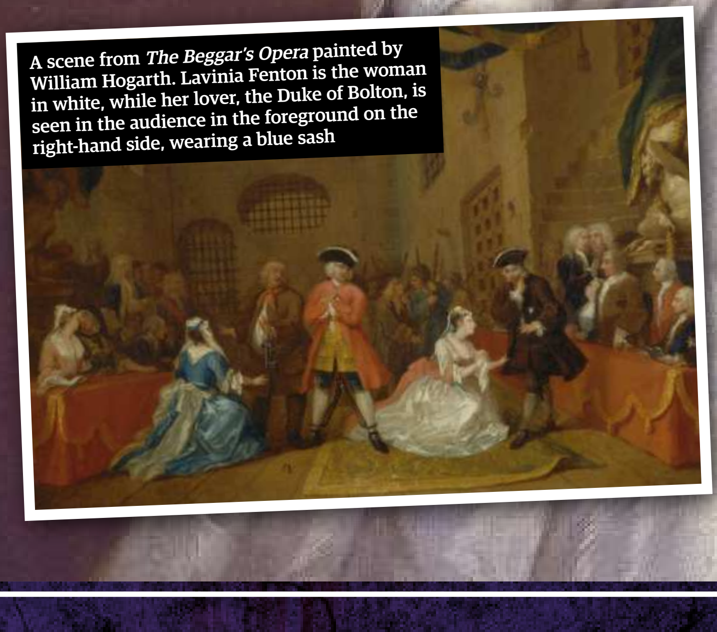
In 1751 Lady Anne died, and surprisingly, Powlett chose to marry his mistress, who had borne him three illegitimate children. Most gentlemen would balk at the thought of making an honourable woman out of a Charing Cross commoner, particularly one who had not only been an actress but also a coffee-house waitress and, it was rumoured, a child prostitute. Nonetheless, Lavinia Fenton became Lady Bolton later the same year. The couple were married on the Continent, far from the prying eyes of the British establishment, although the sources are confused as to whether they married in Aix, Aachen or Turin. Nonetheless, on their return, Lady Lavinia could now freely wander the halls and gardens of Hackwood Park, the hereditary seat of the Dukes of Bolton, near Basingstoke in Hampshire.

And apparently she still walks them. The Grey Lady appears in a shimmer of light in Spring Wood, the park's French-style woodland garden, which was lavishly improved during her time there. There she had a small folly, no longer extant, designed by architect Sir John Vanbrugh (famous for the buildings he designed around her London home of Blackheath), which she liked to use for her daily singing practice.

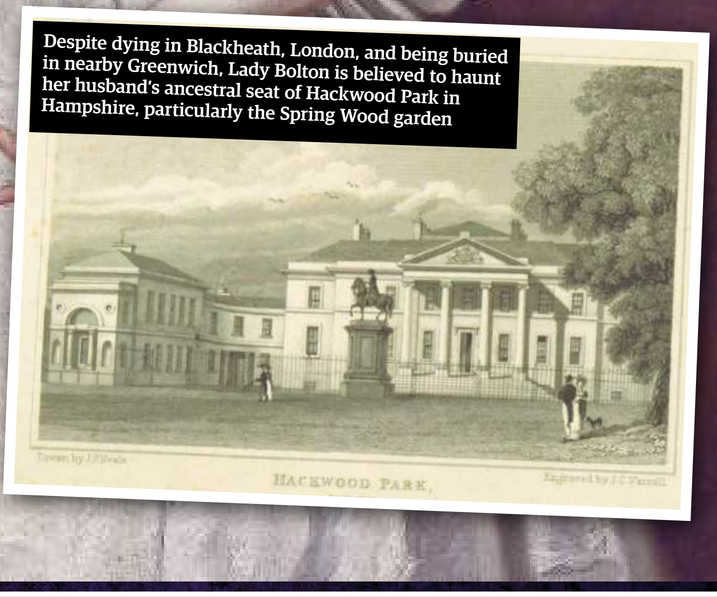
Despite dying in Blackheath's Westcombe Manor and being buried in the churchyard of St Alfege's in nearby Greenwich, it's said that even in death, the Grey Lady still prefers her favourite haunt, 60 miles away, to this day. Perhaps her singing can still be heard in Spring Wood even now...


LAVINIA, Duchess of Bolton
as Polly Peachum.
by Hogarth.

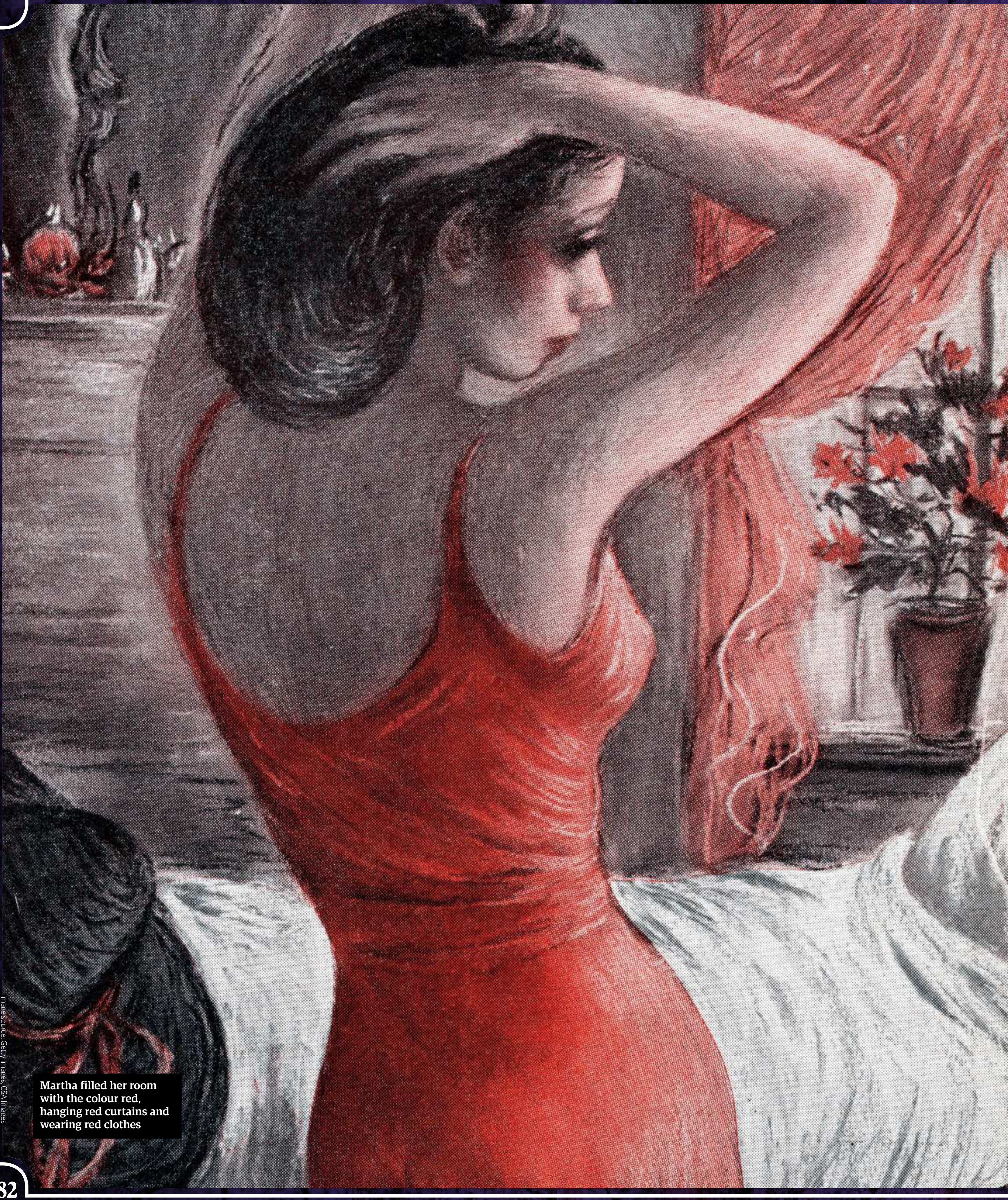
Lavinia Fenton in costume as the iconic character Polly Peachum, from the popular play *The Beggar's Opera*



A scene from *The Beggar's Opera* painted by William Hogarth. Lavinia Fenton is the woman in white, while her lover, the Duke of Bolton, is seen in the audience in the foreground on the right-hand side, wearing a blue sash


Drawn by J.P.Neale
HACKWOOD PARK,
Engraved by J.C.Varrall

Despite dying in Blackheath, London, and being buried in nearby Greenwich, Lady Bolton is believed to haunt her husband's ancestral seat of Hackwood Park in Hampshire, particularly the Spring Wood garden



Martha filled her room with the colour red, hanging red curtains and wearing red clothes

Image source: Getty Images, CSA Images

THE LADY IN RED

Two red wraiths haunt the students of Huntingdon College, encouraging them to befriend one another and care for outsiders

Written by Joanna Elphick

Originally, during the late 1800s, the Women's College of Alabama was located in Tuskegee, and it was here that the first Red Lady was seen. She appeared only once, a beautiful woman in a scarlet dress, carrying a matching parasol and surrounded by a red glow, floating through the halls of the dormitories before disappearing, never to be seen again. Students were naturally unnerved and perplexed by the encounter, but she is now thought to have been a prophecy of what was to come.

The second Red Lady occurred in the early 1900s after the college had moved to a new site in Alabama, now known as Huntingdon College. Not long after it had opened, a young girl from New York named Martha packed her belongings and made her way to her dormitory, Pratt Hall. Dressed all in red, Martha made a strange sight as she lugged bags of red material up to her room on the fourth floor. Red curtains, a red prayer mat, red ornaments and a red bedspread were all ceremoniously unpacked, to the astonishment of her new roommate. Other students came to see the strange new pupil but were instantly put off by her cold and aloof demeanour. She ignored her would-be friends and disregarded any visitors that came calling.

Eventually people stopped coming round and even her roommate moved out, claiming that there was an unpleasant aura about Martha. The dorm president felt sorry for the outsider and decided to move in herself, but after a few weeks of rude and bizarre behaviour, she made the decision to leave. Martha walked in on her just as she was going and reacted with uncharacteristic emotion. She raged at the dorm president, accusing her of being a bad friend.

From then on, Martha's behaviour grew stranger still, wandering around the bedrooms at night in a trance, whispering under her breath. She stopped coming to lessons and missed mealtimes, until eventually the dorm president went to check in on her. An eerie red light emanated from under the door and when she opened it, a dreadful sight met her eyes. Martha had slit her wrists, bathing the floor in blood. Today her ghostly image drifts along the halls on the fourth floor, dressed in red from head to foot, reminding students to care for the outcasts left alone in their rooms.

Image source: Alamy

The Alabama Women's College in 1918, around the time that Martha was a student

SPRING HEELED JACK

Victorian England was completely enthralled by reports of a terrifying supernatural creature that attacked young women on the streets of London

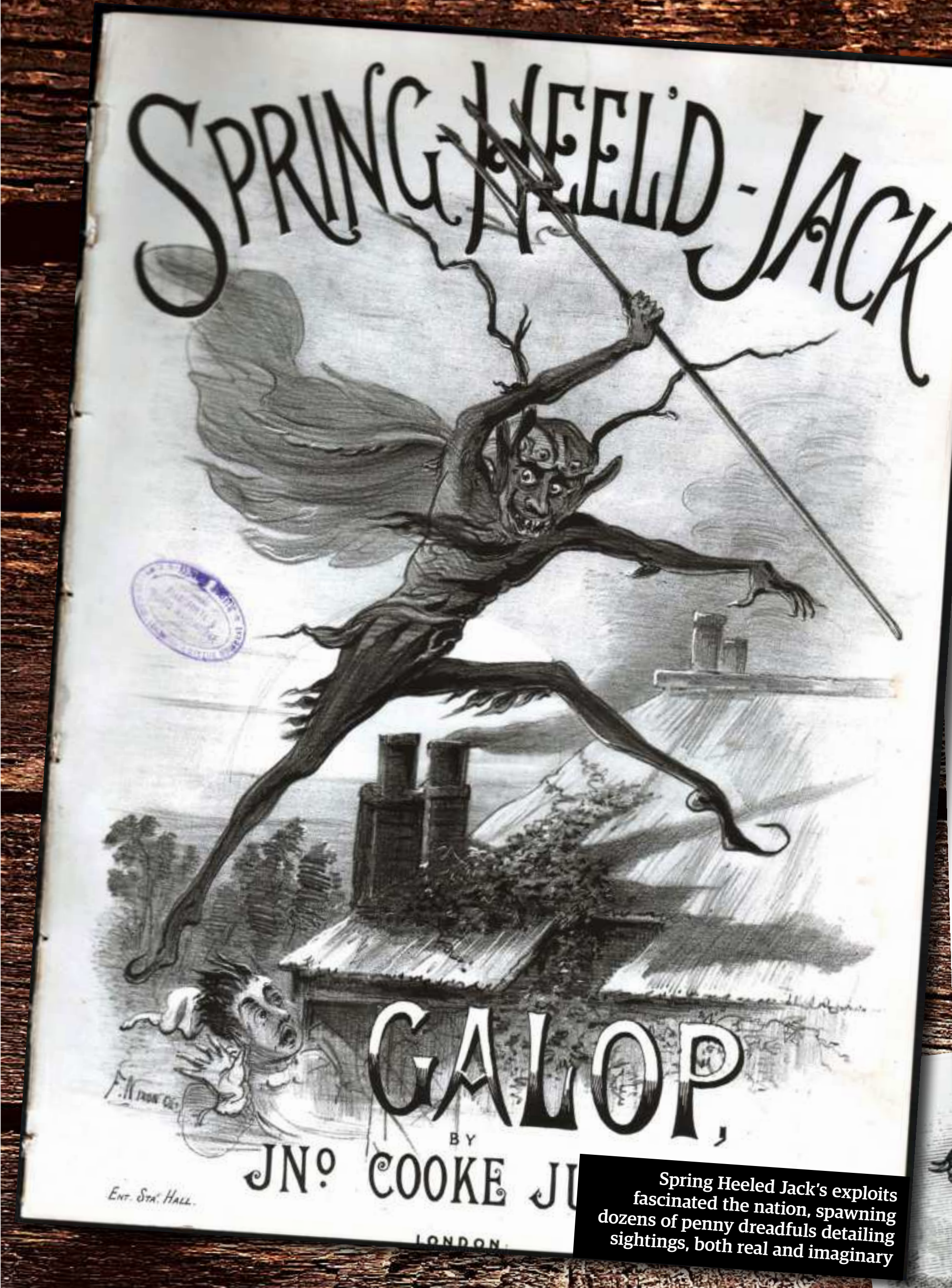
Written by Melanie Clegg

At a time when the British public was fascinated by gothic novels, penny dreadfuls, spooky theatricals and séances, it's hardly surprising that rumours of ghosts and other malign spirits stalking the nation's streets in search of unwary citizens to terrorise. The first known sighting of Spring Heeled Jack, who would become the most famous manifestation of this, occurred in October 1837 when a young woman reported being violently attacked by a peculiar, clawed assailant while walking across Clapham Common. Her screams frightened him off, but the following evening, he struck again, leaping out at a carriage in order to force it off the road before, as witnesses would later claim, jumping over a 9ft wall to make his escape.

Over the following months, tales about the so-called Spring Heeled Jack proliferated as a number of young women in London claimed to have been attacked by a demonic creature with a corpse-like face, sharp claws, fiery red eyes and the extraordinary ability to leap over high walls. The panic became even more intense in February 1838 when two teenage girls were attacked, with both reporting that their terrifying assailant "presented a most hideous and frightful appearance" and spurted blue and white flames from his mouth.

The newspapers were filled with stories and theories about the mysterious Jack, while the public avidly read numerous pamphlets and penny dreadfuls about his exploits. Although many people enjoyed attributing the attacks to a malevolent supernatural being, others believed that marauding young noblemen were to blame, with the young Marquess of Waterford, who was known to love pranks and never turn down a wager, being the number one suspect.

There were several alleged sightings of Spring Heeled Jack over the rest of the century, although they dwindled away and became increasingly rare by the end of the 1840s. In 1877, a soldier on sentry duty at Aldershot Barracks reported being accosted by a peculiar figure who slapped his face and then leapt away "with astonishing bounds" when fired at, while in 1888 he allegedly made an appearance on a church roof in Liverpool before bounding away into the night. Although by now most people believed sightings to be nothing more sinister than the work of pranksters, there is no doubt that Spring Heeled Jack was an integral and significant part of Victorian culture, with even the most sceptical readers reading about his exploits, while parents scared their children into good behaviour by threatening them with a visit from Spring Heeled Jack, the devilish trickster turned folk hero.


SPRING-HEEL'D-JACK
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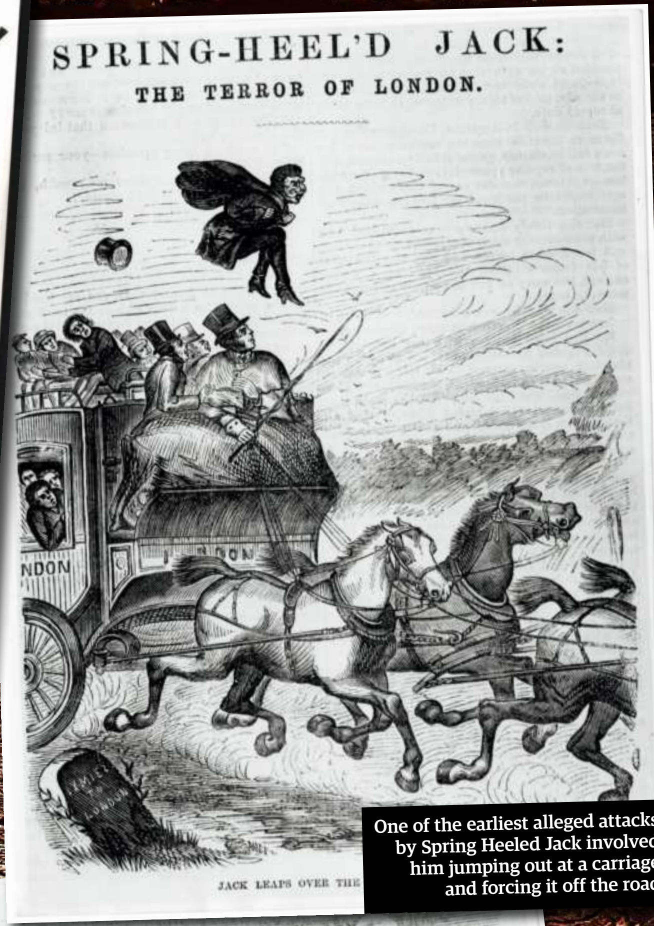
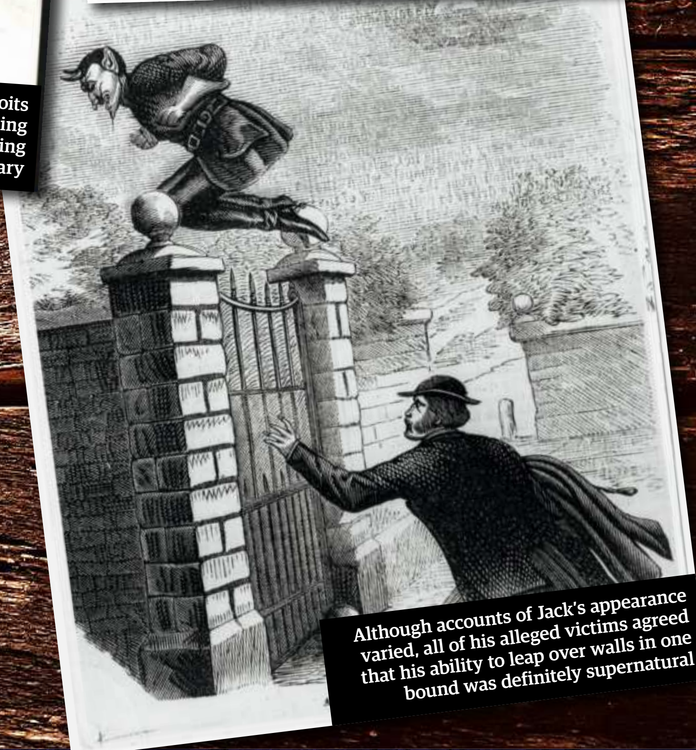
Spring Heeled Jack's exploits fascinated the nation, spawning dozens of penny dreadfuls detailing sightings, both real and imaginary


SPRING-HEEL'D JACK:
THE TERROR OF LONDON.
LONDON
JACK LEAPS OVER THE

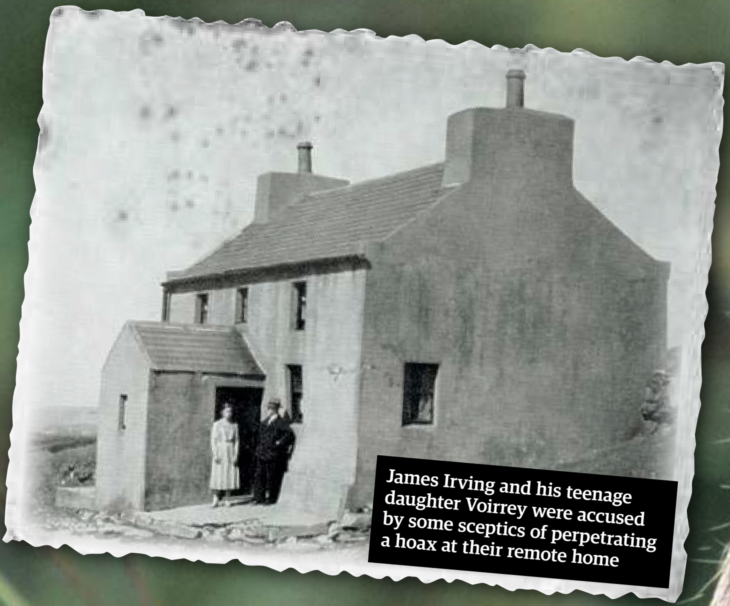
One of the earliest alleged attacks by Spring Heeled Jack involved him jumping out at a carriage and forcing it off the road



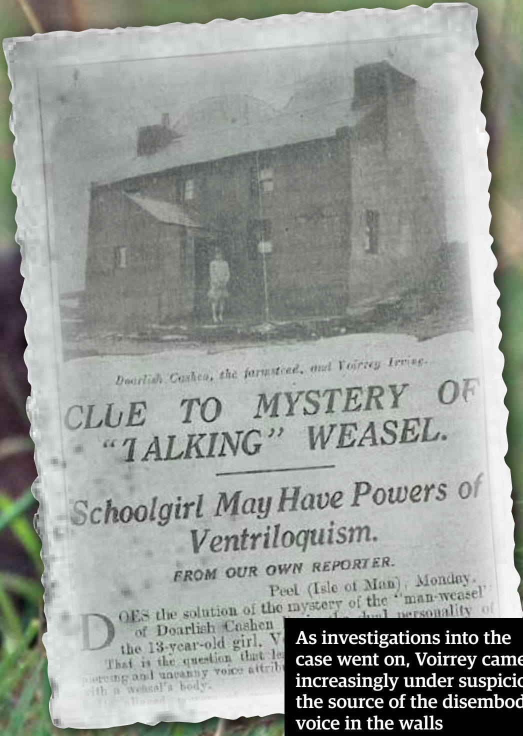
Although accounts of Jack's appearance varied, all of his alleged victims agreed that his ability to leap over walls in one bound was definitely supernatural

> "A number of young women claimed to have been attacked by a demonic creature with the extraordinary ability to leap over high walls"

Image sources: Getty Images



James Irving and his teenage daughter Voirrey were accused by some sceptics of perpetrating a hoax at their remote home



Doarlish Cashen, the farmstead, and Voirrey Irving.

CLUE TO MYSTERY OF "TALKING" WEASEL.

Schoolgirl May Have Powers of Ventriloquism.

FROM OUR OWN REPORTER.

Peel (Isle of Man), Monday.

DOES the solution of the mystery of the "man-weasel" of Doarlish Cashen

the 13-year-old girl, V

That is the question that le

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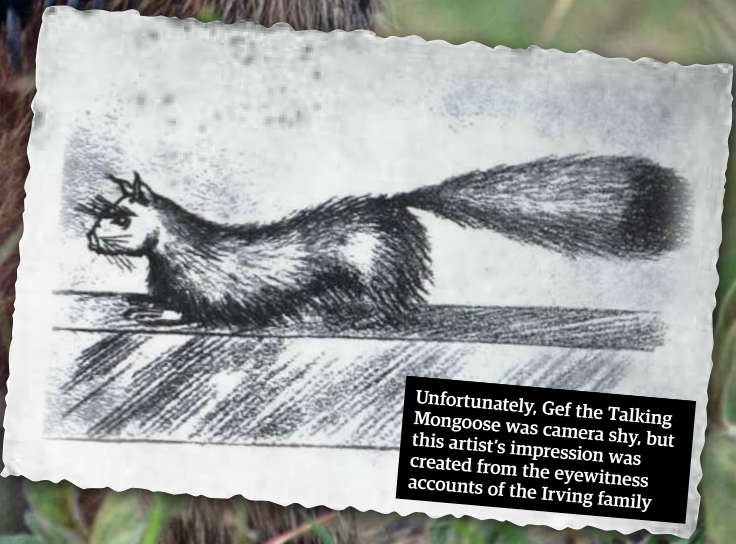
As investigations into the case went on, Voirrey came increasingly under suspicion as the source of the disembodied voice in the walls



Unfortunately, Gef the Talking Mongoose was camera shy, but this artist's impression was created from the eyewitness accounts of the Irving family

Image source: Getty Images

GEF THE TALKING MONGOOSE

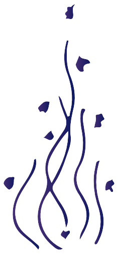
One of the oddest cases in the annals of the unexplained is that of Gef the talking mongoose, also known as the Dalby Spook

Written by Catherine Curzon

In the early 1930s, the tabloid newspapers of Great Britain exploded with excitement over the existence of a mongoose named Gef. A mongoose that, according the family who shared their home with him, was somewhat talkative.

In autumn 1931, James and Margaret Irving and their teenage daughter, Voirrey, began to be troubled by sounds from behind the wooden walls of their farmhouse. What started as scratching was soon accompanied by vocal sounds that led them to believe there might be an animal trapped in the walls. As they were puzzling over what to do, a male voice spoke from behind the wooden panelling and introduced himself as Gef. He told them that he had been born in New Delhi in 1852, and had adopted the form of a mongoose in order not to frighten the family. If this wasn't strange enough, Gef told the Irvings that he would look after the house and its residents in return for food and shelter. He was also exceptionally talkative, and loved to chat to the family.

When journalists and other interested parties, including famed paranormal investigator Harry Price, visited the farmhouse near Dalby on the Isle of Man, Gef suddenly turned shy. He refused to appear, and the only physical evidence that the Irvings could show were stains, footprints and some tufts of fur. When experts were called in to examine the evidence, they concluded that the fur was that of a dog, and that the pawprints supposedly left by Gef were definitively not those of a mongoose. Harry Price also noted that the unusual panelling in the house could effectively be used as a speaking tube. Should anyone - such as 13-year-old Voirrey, for instance - speak into a small hole in the panels, the voice would resonate throughout the house. Many experts dismissed the case of Gef as nothing more than a trick played by a teenage girl, which her parents had either deliberately perpetuated for the sake of fame, or been genuinely taken in by. The house was sold in 1945, and its new resident claimed that he had shot Gef. Upon seeing photos of a large black and white creature, however, Voirrey Irving claimed that it couldn't be the small, yellow Gef. She died in 2005, and maintained to her dying day that Gef the talking mongoose was real. If he was, his current whereabouts are as mysterious as his origins.



THE UNLUCKY MUMMY

Does the ghost of an Egyptian priestess stalk the galleries of the British Museum causing death and suffering wherever she goes?

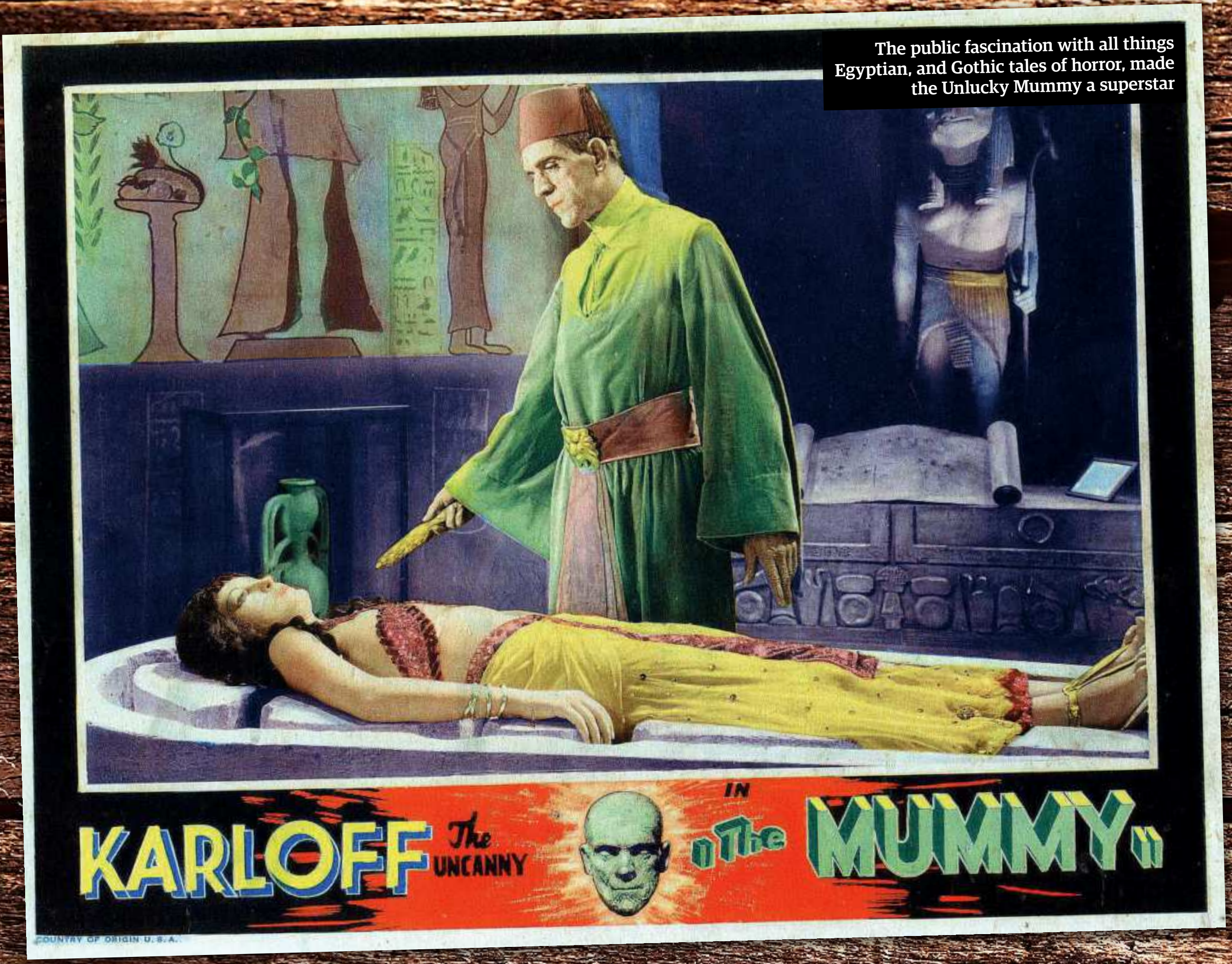
Written by Ben Gazur

The Unlucky Mummy first entered the British Museum collection in 1889, but was already trailing with it tales of disaster. Of those who took the object out of Egypt, one was said to have been shot when a gun inexplicably exploded, while another soon died in poverty. Its owner in Britain suffered financial losses before donating it to the museum, where it remains to this day.

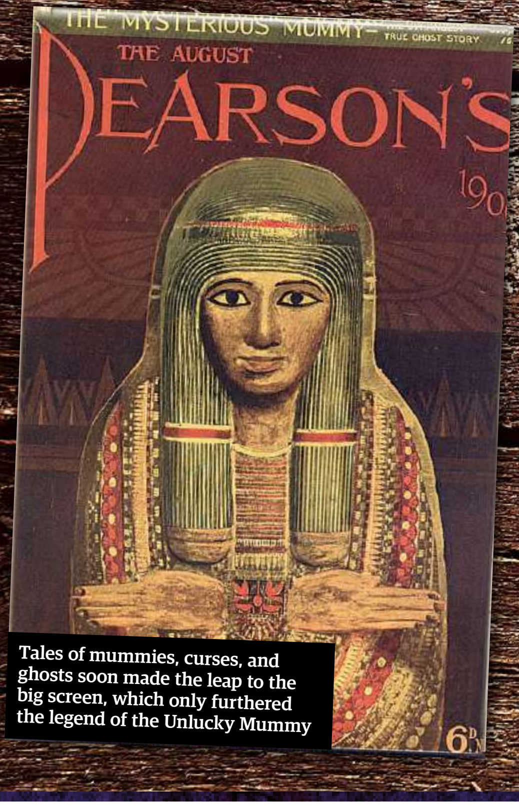
Perhaps the greatest tragedy linked to the Unlucky Mummy is the sinking of the Titanic in 1912. Almost immediately there were reports that the Unlucky Mummy had been on board the ship when it sank - some even suggested that it caused it. Rumour had it that the Unlucky Mummy had been secretly removed from the museum due to its evil nature, and a replica placed in the galleries. When an American spotted the deception, he offered to buy the original, packed it up, and set sail for home on the Titanic. The fact that the object had never left the museum did not stop talk of its baleful effects on the unfortunate ship.

Explanations from museum authorities did little to quell rumours of the Unlucky Mummy's powers. Many people were said to have been struck down simply by looking at it in its case. One man swore that his cardiac issues were caused by the mummy. He begged the museum to return the Unlucky Mummy to her original grave to break the curse. The authorities were unable to comply - they had never possessed the mummy. What is commonly called the Unlucky Mummy is in fact just a painted lid that was placed over a mummy. Dating from around 950 BCE, the coffin lid seems to have been prepared for an important lady, though inscriptions on the lid do not identify her by name. The mummy itself apparently never left Egypt. Her ghost, however, apparently did come to Britain, as she was said to haunt the now closed British Museum underground station, wailing mournfully at night. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of Sherlock Holmes, was a believer in the ghost, and blamed the death of a reporter who had investigated the Unlucky Mummy on the "evil elemental" attached to it.

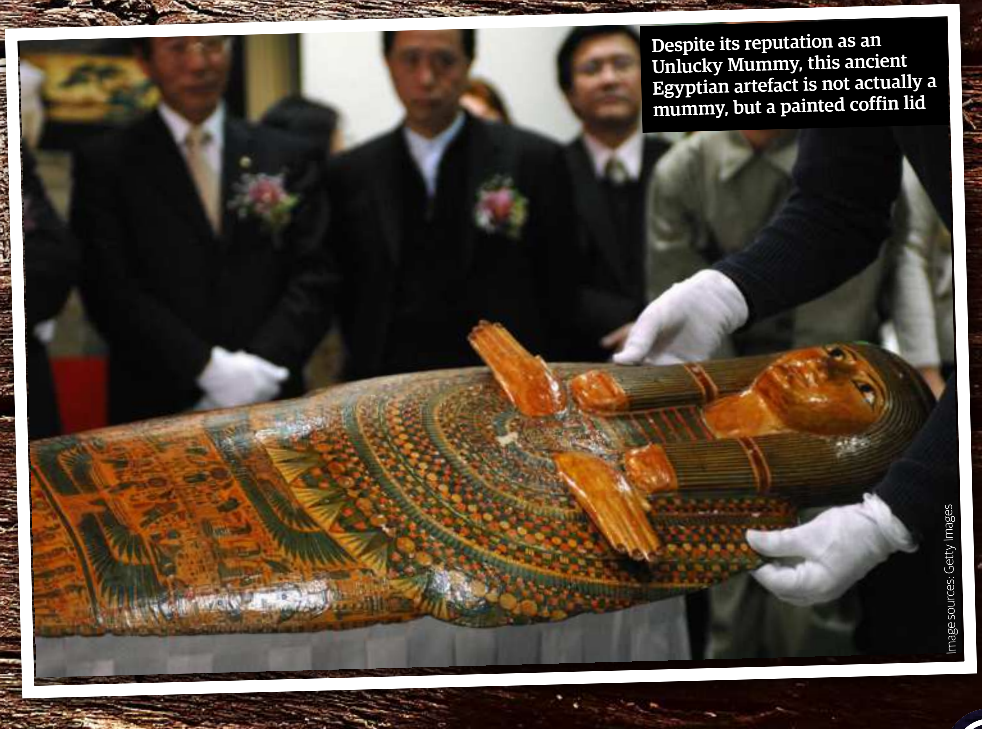
The British Museum was moved to report that this idea was "Nonsense," adding that "Sir Arthur perhaps naturally believes in supernatural agencies connected with Egyptian mummies and other Egyptian objects. I am afraid the officials of the British Museum do not." Regardless of what the museum believes, there are plenty of people who still impute the Unlucky Mummy with dark powers.


KARLOFF
The UNCANNY
IN
The MUMMY
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN U.S.A.

The public fascination with all things Egyptian, and Gothic tales of horror, made the Unlucky Mummy a superstar

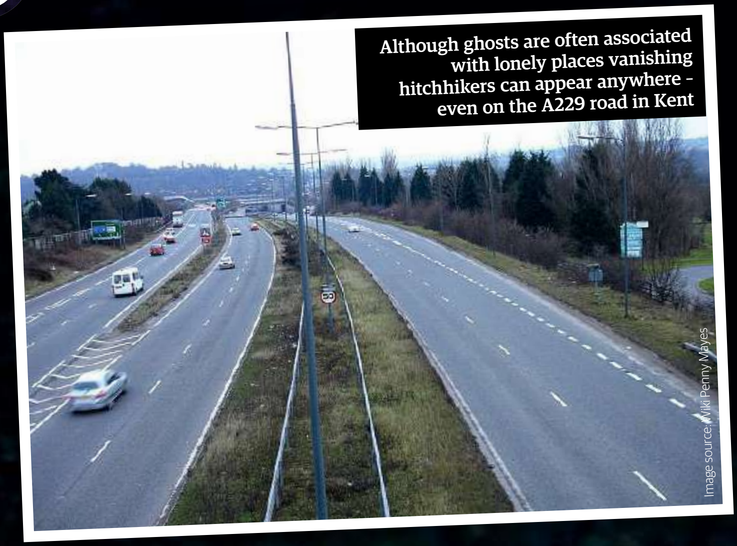

THE MYSTERIOUS MUMMY—TRUE GHOST STORY
THE AUGUST
PEARSON'S
190
6D.

Tales of mummies, curses, and ghosts soon made the leap to the big screen, which only furthered the legend of the Unlucky Mummy



Despite its reputation as an Unlucky Mummy, this ancient Egyptian artefact is not actually a mummy, but a painted coffin lid

Image sources: Getty Images



Although ghosts are often associated with lonely places vanishing hitchhikers can appear anywhere – even on the A229 road in Kent

Image source: Viki Penny Mayes

Ghostly hitchhikers standing by the roadside waiting for a lift have been the stuff of nightmare and rumour since before the dawning of the age of the motor car

A famous vanishing hitchhiker ghost is Resurrection Mary of Illinois, who appears in a white party dress, hitching a lift home from a dance

Image source: Getty Images

GHOSTLY AND VANISHING HITCHHIKERS

Vanishing hitchhikers are found around the world – but are they ghosts, hallucinations, or the stuff of scary urban legends?

Written by Ben Gazur

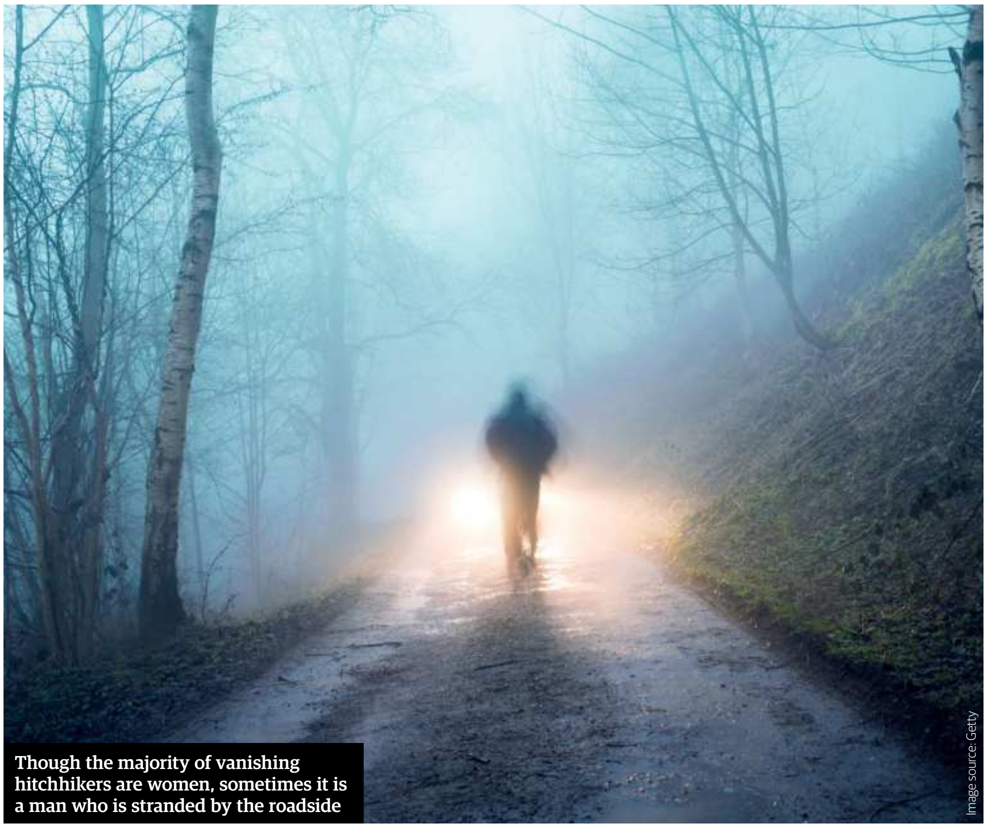
It is late at night and you find yourself driving down a dark and lonely road. In your headlights you catch a glimpse of someone standing on the side of the road with their thumb out. Deciding no one should be out alone on a night like this, you slow down and pick them up. Despite your best efforts to make conversation, your passenger doesn't respond beyond telling you where they want to go. As you approach their drop-off point you glance back in the rear-view mirror - and there is no one there.

You have just been visited by the vanishing hitchhiker.

The above situation is one that has been reported, with variations, across the globe for decades, if not centuries. Even the Bible may contain a vanishing hitchhiker. In the Book of Acts the apostle Philip is picked up by a charioteer, and after blessing the owner of the chariot, disappears. Rarely though do we hear the story from the point of view of the one that disappears.

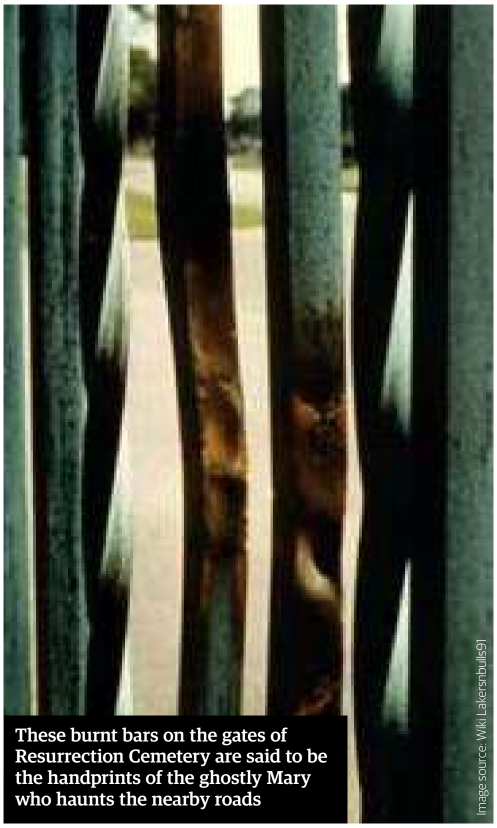
The vanishing hitchhiker that is most familiar to us today, though, is joined to the mass production of the motor car. With ever-more busy roads, and electric lights to guide them, more and more people found themselves driving at night. With more opportunities of being offered a lift, even more people took to hitchhiking when they could not afford a car themselves.

America was the natural location for the vanishing hitchhiker to manifest. The wide open country, early adoption of automobiles, and willingness to help strangers put many into situations where they might offer lifts to stranded people. The vanishing hitchhiker is also a democratic apparition. Where before you might only meet a ghost in a large and ancient manor house of Europe, in



Though the majority of vanishing hitchhikers are women, sometimes it is a man who is stranded by the roadside

Image source: Getty



These burnt bars on the gates of Resurrection Cemetery are said to be the handprints of the ghostly Mary who haunts the nearby roads

Image source: Wiki Lakersnbulls91

the United States you only needed to have a car to run into one. The scene was set for the vanishing hitchhiker to appear, if only briefly.

By the late 1930s, all across the United States people were hearing tales of hitchhikers who mysteriously disappeared from cars. Researchers attempted to find an original story that all the later ones were built on, but could not identify one. It was as if the vanishing hitchhiker arose in many places all at once.

Of the stories told in the middle of the 20th century in the US there were three main strands. In the first the driver is given an address by the hitchhiker before they disappear. Driving there they find that the hitchhiker they had picked up had in fact died several years earlier. In one tale from Baltimore it was a doctor who offered a lift to a young girl wearing a ballgown in the middle of nowhere. When they arrived at the girl's home she was suddenly nowhere to be seen. Concerned the doctor rang on the door and was greeted by the girl's parents. Instead of being alarmed by the doctor's story of a disappearing girl the parents were gloomily accepting, explaining that it had happened several times since their daughter died in a car crash at the place the doctor found her.

A second variant of the story involves a young man who meets an attractive girl at a party. When the gallant gentleman offers her a lift home she agrees, but somehow manages to vanish during the journey, and the address she has given him turns out to be a graveyard. On one of the graves is an item he instantly recognises as the young lady's.

> "One of the most famous vanishing hitchhiker stories is said to have occurred during the Second World War and taken place near Pearl Harbor"

The third type of vanishing hitchhiker is one with prophetic powers. One of the most famous stories is said to have occurred during the Second World War and taken place near Pearl Harbor. A man offered to drive an old lady home. The woman is so grateful that she offered to pay for the extra fuel he would be using, and when the driver turned down her money she instead told him his fortune. Within one hour, she said, the man would see a dead body, and within six months Hitler would be dead. The woman then disappeared. The driver did indeed see a dead body in the allotted time, when he witnessed a car crash, and was left with the certain knowledge that Hitler's demise was not too far behind. In modern Hawaiian folklore the volcano and creator goddess Pele often appears as a vanishing hitchhiker.

With these variations as a basic outline we can see how the vanishing hitchhiker could be relocated to almost anywhere in the world. The address that the hitchhiker gives could be in any town. Anyone who has lost a child to a car accident could be the grieving parent who opens the door. Wherever there is a cemetery there might be a ghost trying to return to their eternal resting spot. In short, these are the building blocks for a classic urban legend.

Urban legends differ from ghost stories in several ways. While a report of a ghost sighting may be simply that - a person mentions seeing a ghost - an urban legend is more involved. For an urban legend to be passed around it must include characters, a plot, and often a moral to the tale. In some reports of the vanishing hitchhiker we find all these things. When a naive young man gives a lift to a ravishing and mysterious stranger who later disappears but leads him to a graveyard, the meaning is all too clear - the world is full of seductive dangers for silly boys. It is interesting that many, if not most, vanishing hitchhikers are female. This may be because of the perceived need to aid lone women seen out at night. When male hitchhikers vanish they are often described as dark, brooding, or somehow threatening.

Urban legends tend to be mutable in their location and details, just as we see with the stories about the vanishing hitchhiker. Where the vanishing hitchhiker differs from an urban legend is where specific cases can be tracked down. In Chicago there is the case of Resurrection Mary.

One night in the 1930s a girl called Mary had a quarrel with her boyfriend at a dance and refused his offer to drive her home. Walking along Archer Avenue she was struck and killed by a car. Ever since, drivers have reported seeing a girl dressed for a dance waiting at that spot. Those who stop to help find that Mary says nothing as they drive along, but whenever they reach Resurrection Cemetery she disappears. Some even claim that her fingerprints are burned into the metal bars of the graveyard.

> Vanishing hitchhiker stories often cross the boundary between folklore and ghost stories, and the more modern urban legend

Here we see a version of the tale that has a concrete location and is unchanging in its details. The identity of Resurrection Mary has even been suggested as belonging to real individuals. She may have been Mary Bregovy, who died in 1934, or Anna "Marja" Norkus, who died in a car accident leaving the same dancehall that Resurrection Mary is said to have walked home from.

In South Africa you may meet the Uniondale Ghost. According to newspaper reports a couple were driving home at night when the driver lost control and his fiancée Maria Charlotte Roux was thrown from the car and killed. In 1976 a driver saw a young girl standing by the road in the rain. He stopped to let her into the car and all she would say was an address. Before he could reach the destination, however, the girl disappeared.

Understandably alarmed, the driver went to a police station where an officer, again understandably, sent him away as a time waster. As soon as he got to the car the driver heard an unearthly scream and returned to the police station. The policeman saw one of the car doors open and close of its own accord as if an invisible passenger had got out.

The fact that the names of two witnesses are recorded and a precise date known sets this report apart from the usual run of urban legends. Another such case with named individuals is the famous vanishing hitchhiker of Blue Bell Hill on the A229 in Kent. There the ghost of Susan Brown, who died in 1965, is said to wait for helpful drivers to offer her a ride.

It seems that wherever someone has lost their life to a traffic accident there is the chance for a vanishing hitchhiker to come into being. Perhaps it is because we see so many young lives cut short in this way that we can so easily believe that they would cling on as ghosts, trying to reach the place they never would alive.

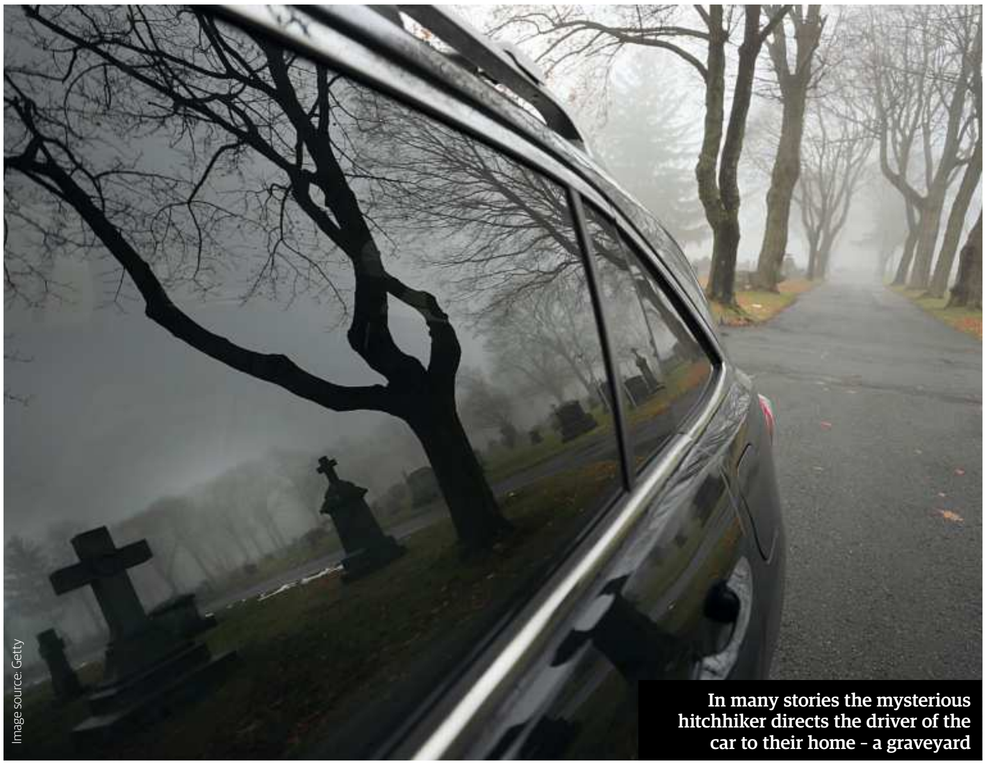


Image source: Getty

In many stories the mysterious hitchhiker directs the driver of the car to their home - a graveyard

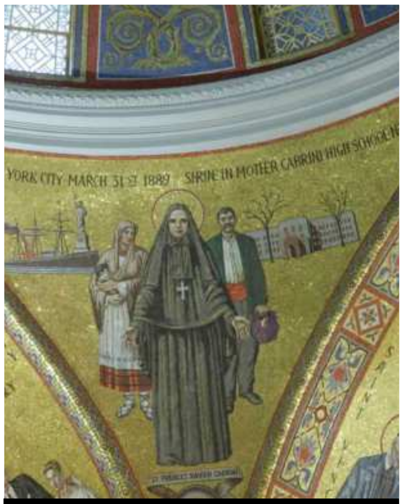
MOTHER CABRINI'S GHOST

The ghost that became most famous as the disappearing hitchhiker during WWII

Frances Xavier Cabrini, known to her New York neighbours as Mother Cabrini, was the first US citizen to be made a saint. She was fondly remembered because of her record of opening orphanages, teaching, and providing for the poor. Yet in New York she also became famous for her appearance as a disappearing hitchhiker during the Second World War.

Wars are fertile breeding grounds for prophecy, especially where the prospect of peace is concerned. In the New York area in 1941 a story spread about a nun who would get into a taxi and predict the end of the war within months, before vanishing. Despite her supernatural abilities, these predictions all turned out to be wrong. Though Mother Cabrini died in 1917, one taxi driver who was devoted to her recognised the nun as none other than Cabrini herself. Soon afterwards the driver is said to have suffered a nervous breakdown. Though many miracles were attached to her, the local Catholic churches soon moved to quash rumours of her return.

Whether or not Mother Cabrini really did appear briefly in cars in 1941, some folklorists see the story as belonging to tales from other cultures, especially Hawaii, where a holy person or native god, not a ghost, is the passenger who vanishes.


YORK CITY MARCH 31st 1889 SHRINE IN MOTHER CABRINI HIGH SCHOOL

Lombardy-born Mother Cabrini was told to go to America and not China by the Pope, who said "Not to the East, but to the West"

Image source: Wiki Andrew Balet

POSSESSIONS AND POLTERGEISTS

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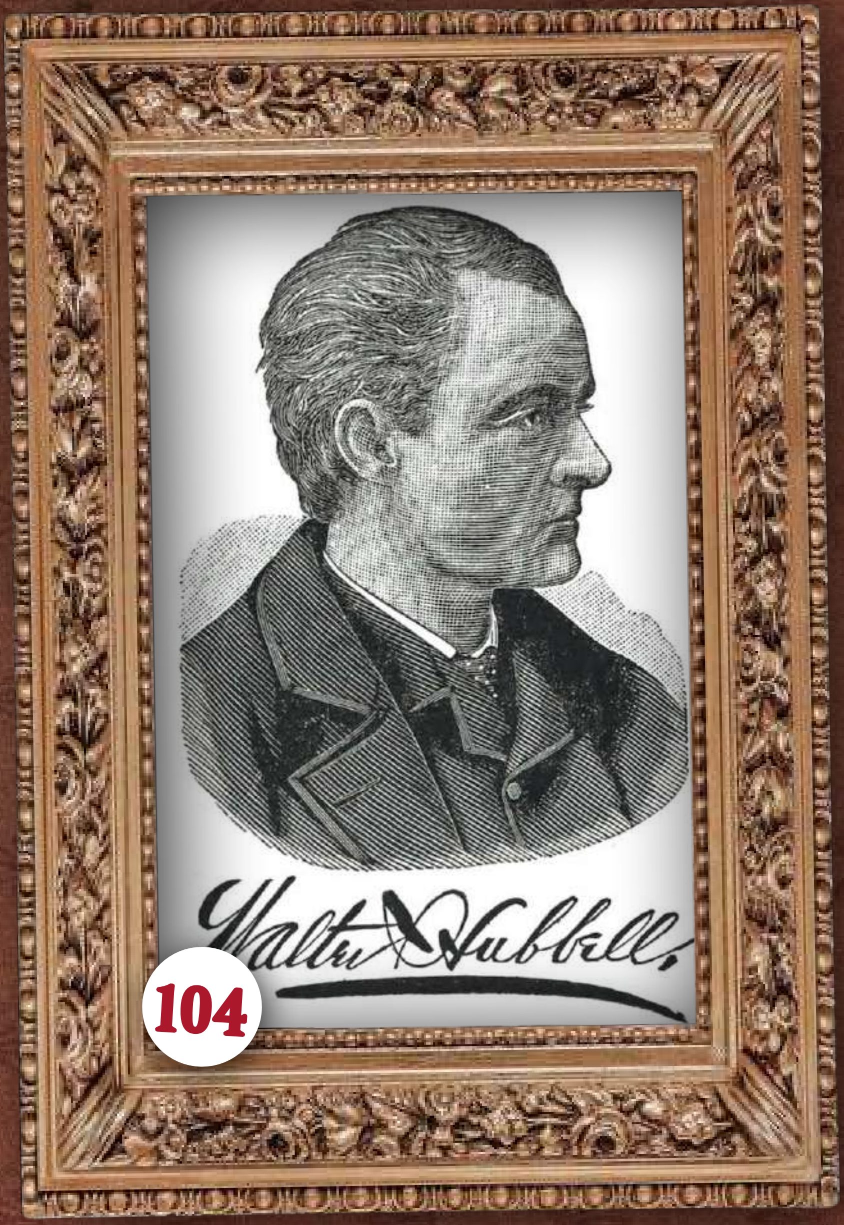

Walter Hubbell.
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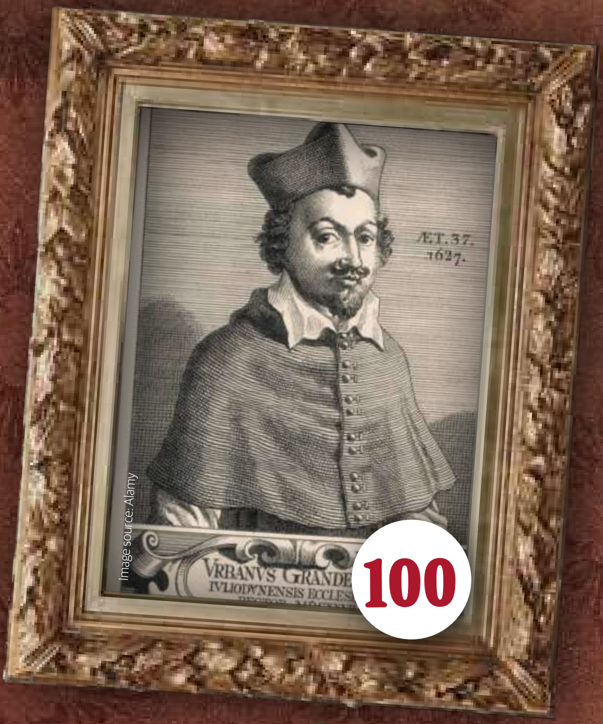

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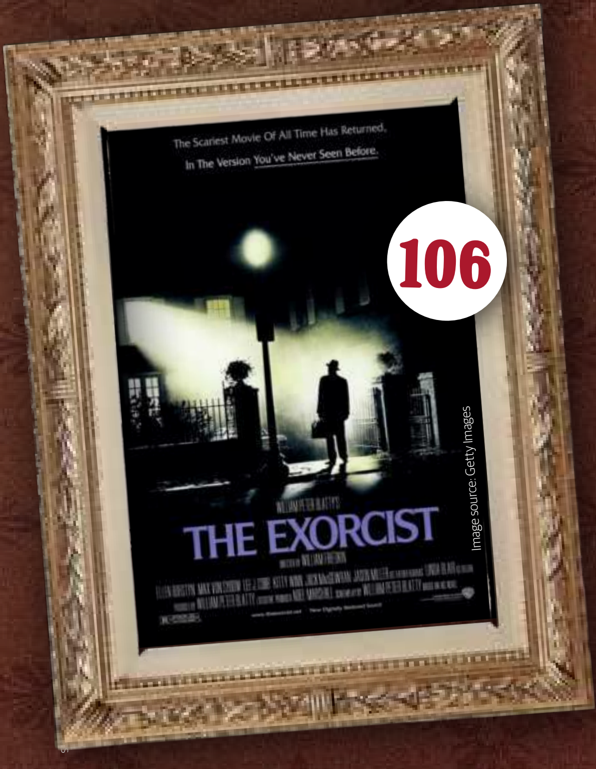
Image source: Alamy

Image source: Getty Images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The Scariest Movie Of All Time Has Returned,
In The Version You've Never Seen Before.
WILLIAM PETER BLATTY'S
THE EXORCIST

Image source: Getty Images

THE POLTERGEIST PARADOX

Its manifestations rooted in physical disturbances, the phenomenon of the poltergeist dates to ancient times

Written by Michael E Haskew

There were strange goings on at Borley Rectory, almost from the day Reverend Henry Dawson Ellis Bull and his family moved into their newly constructed residence in Borley, Essex, in 1862.

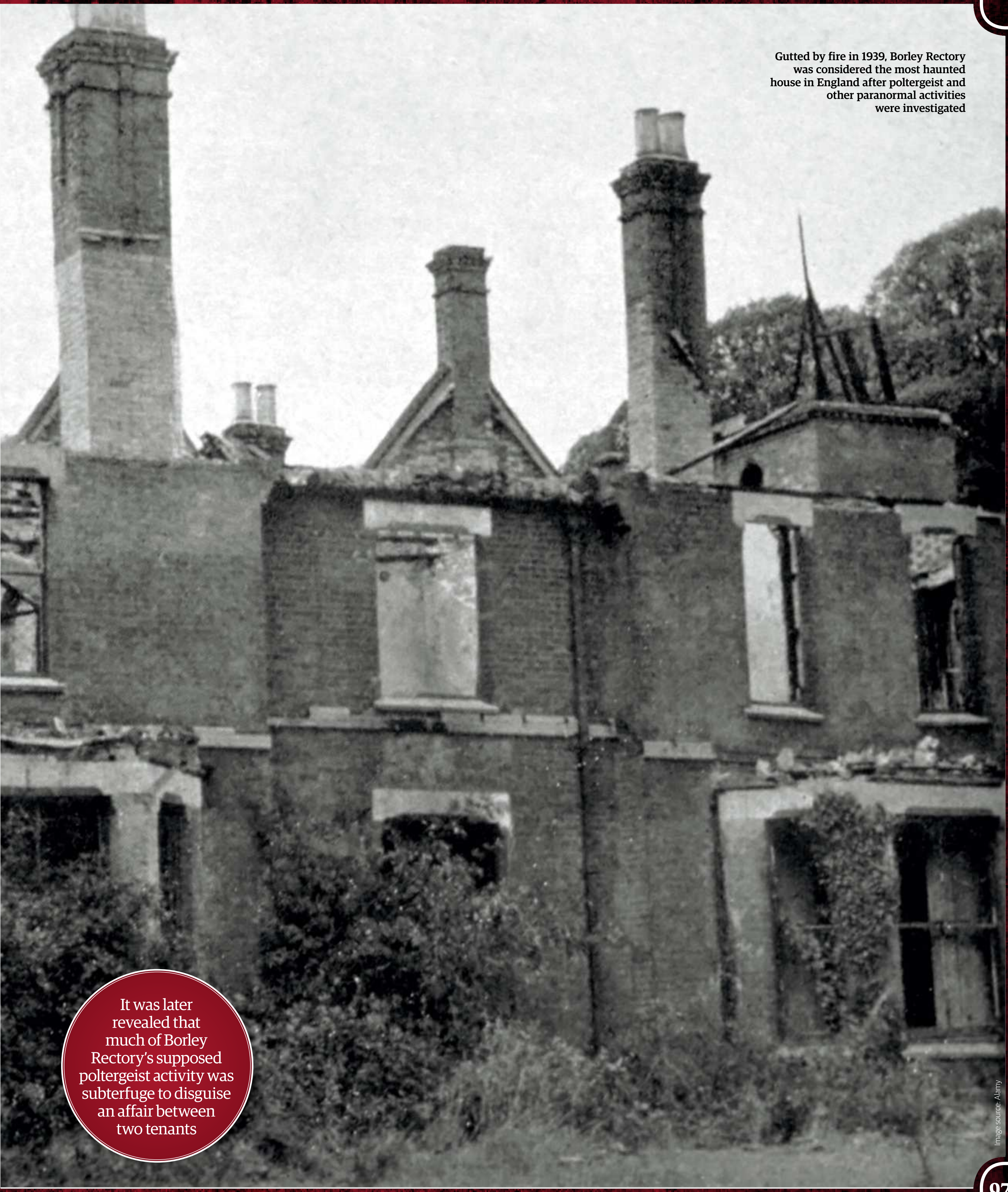
Visitors listened curiously to unexplained footsteps. Four daughters of the rector thought they saw the ghost of a nun at twilight about 40 yards outside the imposing structure. Stories circulated of a phantom coach driven by a pair of headless horsemen, and when the house was nearly 70 years old, the young wife of the Reverend Guy Eric Smith was said to have found a plain paper package in a cupboard, opening it to be shocked by the discovery of a woman's skull.

Among the varied troublings were the distinctive sounds of electric servants' bells ringing although they had been disconnected, more mysterious footfalls, and odd appearances of lights in windows. These eerie occurrences, without the physical manifestations of a ghost or other apparition, are generally classified as poltergeists, mischevious and malevolent spirits that make their presence known with noise and activity, some violent. In fact, the word "poltergeist" stems from the German "poltern," meaning to rattle, and "geist," meaning spirit.

The phenomenon of the poltergeist is among the most ancient of paranormal encounters in the history of mankind, with one of the first recorded in Egypt millennia ago, and others dating to the 1st century and Roman times. The poltergeist is recognised for its effects rather than an ephemeral appearance, and is characterised by banging, tapping and other loud noises, ringing telephones, flashing electric lights, hurling of stones, misplacement of personal effects, books flying from shelves, and even physical and sexual assault – each of them without the sighting of a perpetrator, but nevertheless sometimes leaving victims with injuries, and sceptics scratching their heads.

Poltergeists are widely believed to be associated with particular individuals, although this is not always the case. Children, however – prepubescent girls, to be more exact – are regularly known as 'victims', if such a term can be deemed appropriate. These individuals may be experiencing psychological or emotional stress, or even a hormone imbalance, that leads to behaviour and experiences attributable to paranormal activity.

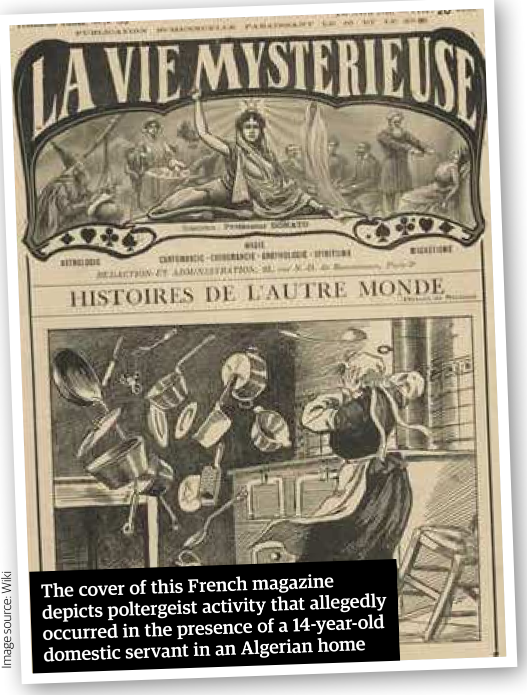
Poltergeists are the focus of study by parapsychologists, whose field is often viewed with incredulity within the mainstream scientific community. However, though fraud and deception have been discovered, other manifestations



Gutted by fire in 1939, Borley Rectory was considered the most haunted house in England after poltergeist and other paranormal activities were investigated

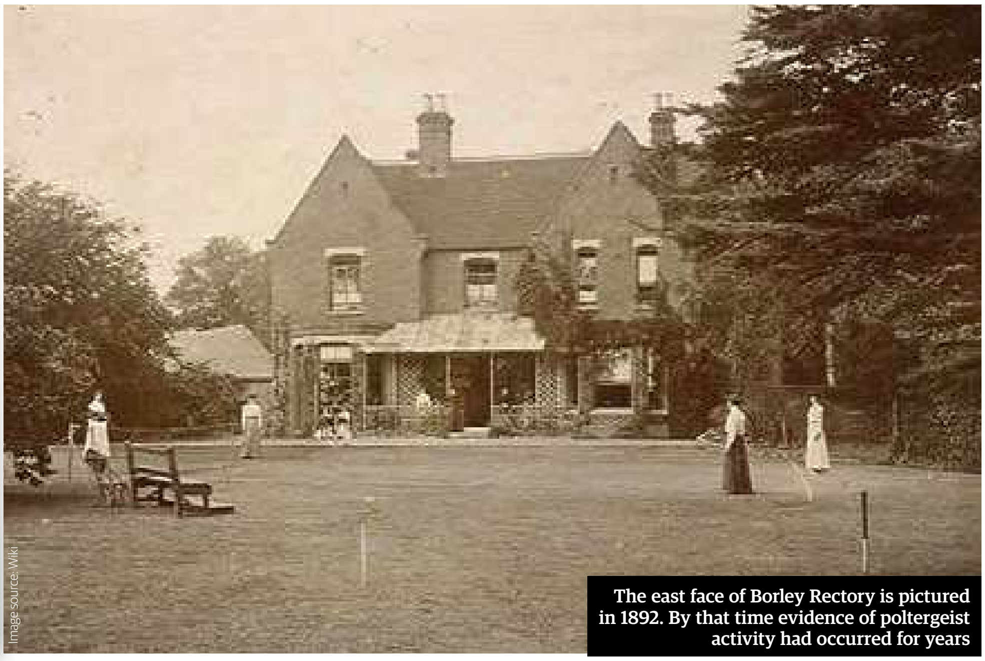
It was later revealed that much of Borley Rectory's supposed poltergeist activity was subterfuge to disguise an affair between two tenants

Image source: Alamy


LA VIE MYSTERIEUSE
ASTROLOGIE
MAGIE
CARTOMANCIE - CHIROMANCIE - GRAPHOLOGIE - SPIRITISME
MAGNÉTISME
HISTOIRES DE L'AUTRE MONDE

The cover of this French magazine depicts poltergeist activity that allegedly occurred in the presence of a 14-year-old domestic servant in an Algerian home

Image source: Wiki



The east face of Borley Rectory is pictured in 1892. By that time evidence of poltergeist activity had occurred for years

Image source: Wiki

remain unexplained and study of the phenomenon flourishes.

Parapsychologist William G Roll, a German-born professor with the psychology department of the University of West Georgia, coined the phrase "recurrent spontaneous psychokinesis," or RSPK, to describe the general activities of the poltergeist. Such activities tend to focus on a specific individual. They begin suddenly and may dissipate quickly as well. Some researchers have concluded that the poltergeist activity is the manifestation of some prior psychological trauma, while others argue that a person's violent death while in a physical frenzy may trigger a return of that individual in poltergeist form to exact vengeance.

Others assert that poltergeists are literally heightened emotion implanted into the fabric of time itself, releasing like recordings until the energy is dissipated. According to some researchers, the poltergeist experience stems from a psychic source and differs markedly from a 'haunting' generated from the spirit world. The manifestation of the poltergeist is said to last for a short time. Rarely in history have such experiences been known to extend beyond days or weeks, ebbing into disturbed memory. However, exceptions have been known.

Of course, there are those unscrupulous charlatans, those who develop elaborate hoaxes, and others that prey upon the credulous. Despite these occurrences, the evidence of numerous poltergeist experiences remains - unverified but valid to many, particularly those with first-hand involvement. Verifiable poltergeist activity has never been captured on camera, and physical evidence is always subject to harsh scrutiny.

> "Others assert that poltergeists are literally heightened emotion implanted into the fabric of time itself, releasing like recordings until the energy is dissipated"

Poltergeists are thought to manifest in a much more physical way than other hauntings, throwing objects, making noise, and even attacking people

When Reverend Lionel Algernon Foyster and his wife Marianne moved into Borley Rectory with their adopted daughter, Adelaide, in October 1930, they probably were aware of strange occurrences in the residence, but perhaps they were unprepared for the outburst of poltergeist manifestation that greeted them. Windows not only rattled, they shattered. Bells rang. Bottles and stones were hurled about, apparently by no one. Writings were scrawled across walls, one of them supposedly reading, "Marianne, please help me get out." And Adelaide was locked in a room with a key nowhere in sight. Marianne was summarily tossed from her bed by an unseen force, and Adelaide was attacked by an invisible assailant that was simply described as "something horrible."

Reverend Foyster attempted two exorcisms, but in the midst of the first he was struck in the shoulder by a large stone. He wrote a description of the unsettling events and sent it to well-known psychic researcher Harry Price. Meanwhile, reports of the occurrences reached newspapers, and other researchers evaluated the situation, settling on Marianne as the cause, either unknowingly or deliberately, and she admitted to fabricating some of the incidents to cover up a romantic affair with a boarder. Still, other events remained unexplained, and rightly so. Some of the poltergeist-related events had taken place before the Foysters even arrived at Borley Rectory. The family moved away in October 1935.

Price leased the property in the spring of 1937 and brought a group of 48 observers to report any odd goings on at the rectory. A few months later, one of Price's associates conducted a séance in Streatham, reportedly making contact with a deceased nun, Marie Lairre, who had left her order and been murdered at Borley Hall, the 17th century manor house on the site of the rectory. Her body was said to have been thrown down a well. Soon, another spirit - identified as Sunex Amures - supposedly claimed he would set fire to the rectory in March 1938 and the bones of a murdered individual would be discovered.

Amid these extraordinary events, Price labelled Borley Rectory "the most haunted house in England." Then, on 27 February 1939, the new owner of the rectory knocked over an oil lamp. The subsequent fire heavily damaged the

The Old Rectory in Epworth, Lincolnshire, scene of paranormal activity attributed to the 'Wesley Poltergeist' during the 18th century

structure, and a debate ensued as to whether the blaze had been set deliberately. The insurance company refused to pay the owner's claim.

Price led an excavation in the rectory cellars in 1943 and claimed to have found two bones that he believed were those of a young woman. They were buried in a nearby churchyard, but doubters said they were the bones of a pig. After Price died in 1948, several detractors accused him of fakery. They revived the confession of Marianne Foyster, and she repeated her story of guilt. However, some of the events at Borley Rectory remain unexplained, and the debate as to the presence of a poltergeist continues today. True enough, many of the legendary poltergeist activities at the rectory have been invented. However, the prospect that at least a few of them contain a shred of credibility is tantalising.

Other stories of poltergeists have come and gone, some more believable than others. Those who experience such unexplained phenomena may consider the nature of their encounter. Poltergeist activity is characterised by unexplained interference, interruption or onset of electrical current, odd smells with no apparent source inside a building, objects appearing to levitate or being thrown some distance and potentially capable of causing serious injury, objects that seem to vanish and possibly reappear in odd locations, surges of unexplained power, such as a clock that has not worked for years suddenly coming to life, tapping or knocking noises of unexplained origin, and even physical assault.

For those in pursuit of the unexplained, the aid of a parapsychologist may be in order. A thorough investigation may provide answers, or even deepen the mystery. The subject of poltergeist activity continues to generate interest and has become a mainstay of the entertainment industry, which has produced many films depicting such phenomena.

No doubt, the idea of the poltergeist, steeped in the real and the imagined, folklore and fantasy, piques the curiosity of mankind. Its lure is enduring, and the fascination with its possible existence in the physical realm ensures that its popularity will not diminish.

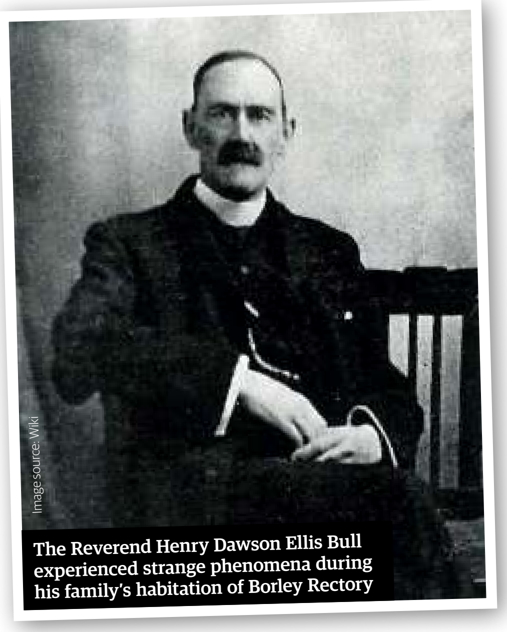


Image source: Wiki

The Reverend Henry Dawson Ellis Bull experienced strange phenomena during his family's habitation of Borley Rectory

TWO WORDS: 'THEY'RE HERE!'

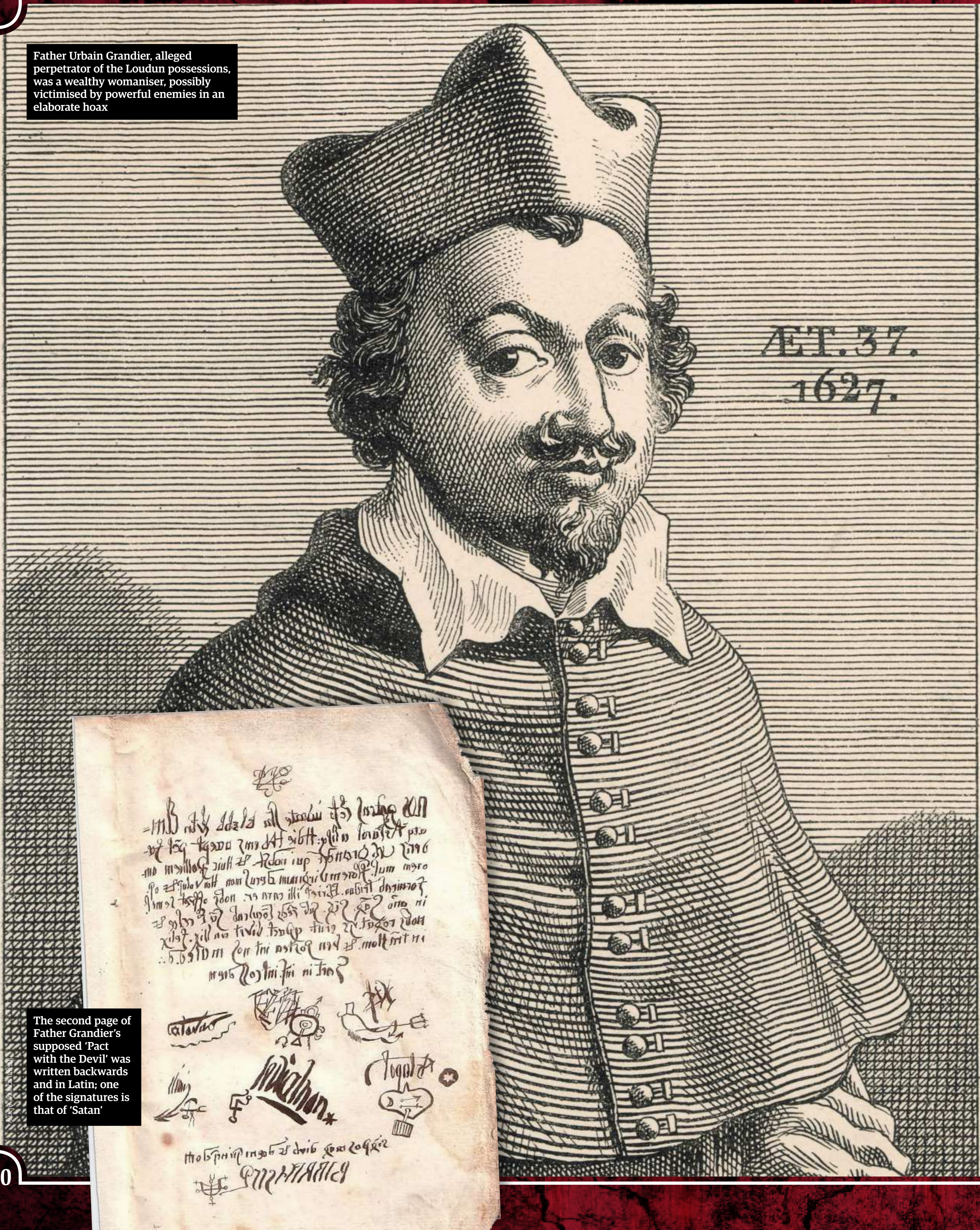
How one horror movie spawned a cult... and cemented a curse

No other modern media has the power to draw on the popular imagination more than the feature film, and the 1982 release of the blockbuster *Poltergeist*, directed by Tobe Hooper and produced by the legendary Steven Spielberg, did just that. A riveting tour de force of horror, the film depicts the ordeal of the Freeling family, their house constructed atop a Native American burial ground, and restless otherworldly apparitions visiting with the youngest member of the family, the flaxen-haired second daughter, through a television set. As the phenomenon manifests itself, she proclaims to the audience, "They're here!"

***Poltergeist* boosted the study of the paranormal and became a classic, ranked number 84 on the American Film Institute's '100 Years... 100 Thrills', a compendium of the greatest heart-stopping movies in US history, while the scene depicting an attack on the Freelings' son, Robbie, by a clown doll ranked 80th among Bravo's '100 Scariest Movie Moments'. Starring Craig T Nelson, JoBeth Williams, Heather O'Rourke, and Dominique Dunne, the film spawned two sequels and a legacy that some believe involves a curse. Four deaths occurred during or soon after the production of the franchise, including Dunne, strangled by her boyfriend, and young, cherubic O'Rourke, who tragically died at age 12 during emergency abdominal surgery.**

Image source: Getty

Young Carol Anne Freeling baffles her parents while advising, "They're here!"



Father Urbain Grandier, alleged perpetrator of the Loudun possessions, was a wealthy womaniser, possibly victimised by powerful enemies in an elaborate hoax

The second page of Father Grandier's supposed 'Pact with the Devil' was written backwards and in Latin; one of the signatures is that of 'Satan'

Image source: Alamy

THE LOUDUN POSSESSIONS

The supposed demonic possession of Ursuline nuns and the chequered reputation of a priest led to a grisly 17th-century execution

Written by Michael E Haskew

The verdict was delivered on 18 August 1634. Father Urbine Grandier, a local priest in the French town of Loudun, was guilty of 'magic, maleficia, and of causing demoniacal possession'. His punishment was torture and execution – to be burned at the stake.

The trouble had begun two years earlier in the town's small Ursuline convent, when some of the nuns began experiencing terrible visitations from the apparition of a priest. At first, this 'father' spouted filthy language and encouraged the nuns to participate in lurid activities. Then, the women began to convulse, howl and act in a wholly unbecoming sexual manner.

The mother superior, Jeanne des Anges, identified the individual who conjured such work of the Devil. Father Grandier was not only wealthy, but also a reputed ladies' man. He was thought to have fathered a child by the daughter of the solicitor of King Louis XIII at Loudun, and was convicted of immorality in 1630. Grandier, well connected in the Roman Catholic hierarchy, salvaged his position, but gained the enmity of many by the time the strange happenings at the convent had begun. Perhaps the greatest peril for Grandier lay in his criticism of Cardinal Richelieu, the king's chief minister.

In the coming days, the possessions intensified, with the nuns speaking in unfamiliar languages, levitating, displaying tremendous strength, and causing objects to move with the power of thought. One witness wrote: "They uttered cries so horrible and so loud that nothing like it was ever heard before; they made use of expressions so indecent as to shame the most debauched of men…" Grandier was arrested and tortured to extract a confession. However, he maintained his innocence throughout the ordeal. Ironically, at his trial some of the afflicted nuns spoke in his defence. There was no evidence of 'Devil marks' that were supposedly on their bodies, and Grandier's purported 'pact with the Devil' appeared to have been written in the mother superior's hand. Amid a round of exorcisms that drew large crowds, the court, perhaps under Richelieu's influence and that of other enemies of the defendant, dismissed the defence as the Devil's manipulation. After Grandier's execution, the exorcisms continued, and some nuns confessed they had participated in a hoax. Still, several leaders of these rites were supposedly later tormented by demons.

The source of the Loudun possessions, one of the largest and longest episodes of mass demonic possession in history, remains debatable. Either the Devil had had his day, or people had schemed against one another to gain and hold power.

THE BELL WITCH HAUNTING

In rural Robertson County, Tennessee, a spirit vexed a family for years, exhibiting violence, intelligence and curiosity, and even committing a murder

Written by Michael E Haskew

Numerous variations on the theme of haunting have emerged across the years to explain the phenomenon of the Bell Witch, a spirit whose mischief and malevolence has become a staple of folklore in Tennessee and across the southeastern United States.

Around 1817, John Bell, Sr moved his family from North Carolina to Robertson County, Tennessee. On an otherwise ordinary day that first year, Bell was inspecting his cornfield and spotted a strange animal. He fired his musket, but the animal disappeared. After nightfall, the family heard banging on the outside of their cabin. Attempts to find the culprit were fruitless.

Soon, strange visitations occurred almost nightly. The Bell children swore they heard rats gnawing their bedposts. Bedding was stripped and thrown to the floor. The faint voice of an old woman was singing hymns.

The youngest Bell child, Betsy, felt the Bell Witch's wrath. She was physically assaulted, slapped in the face, and had her hair pulled. When the attacks subsided, she was left with bruises and scratches. The father confided in neighbour James Johnston, who spent the night in the cabin, experiencing a visitation and shouting: "In the name of the Lord, who are you and what do you want?"

There was no response. The Bell Witch is said to have manifested herself to famed soldier and future president Andrew Jackson, who visited the family. Her voice grew stronger, and she was heard singing hymns and quoting scripture. She also repeated word for word the texts of two sermons being preached simultaneously 13 miles apart.

She particularly disliked John Bell, Sr, whom she attacked repeatedly. When Bell died in 1820, she gloated that a vial of poison had been used to silence 'Old Jack Bell'. She haunted his funeral, laughing and singing a song about brandy until the last mourner departed.

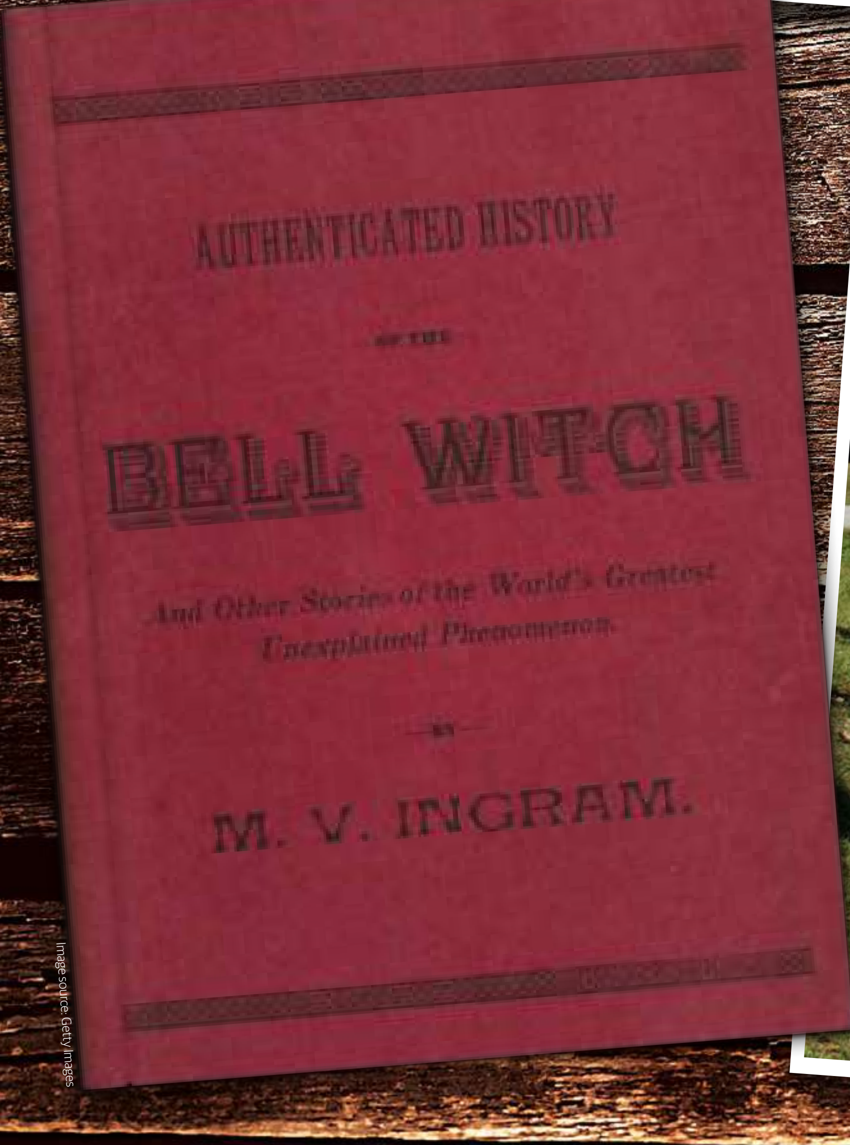
When Betsy Bell became engaged, the Bell Witch expressed displeasure, disrupting the courtship until Betsy called the wedding off. In 1821, the spirit appeared to Lucy, John Bell Sr's widow, stating she would return in seven years. She reemerged in 1828, spending most of her time with John Bell, Jr.

She spoke of spiritual awakening, discussed Christianity, and accurately predicted the coming of the Civil War.

After three weeks, the Bell Witch departed, promising to return in 107 years to visit the closest living family relative in 1935. That relative, Dr Charles Bailey Bell of Nashville, wrote a book on the Bell Witch. No other information was forthcoming.

Two centuries after her first manifestation, the Bell Witch legend still fascinates. The cause of the haunting remains a mystery.

Image source: © Brian Stansberry


AUTHENTICATED HISTORY

OF THE

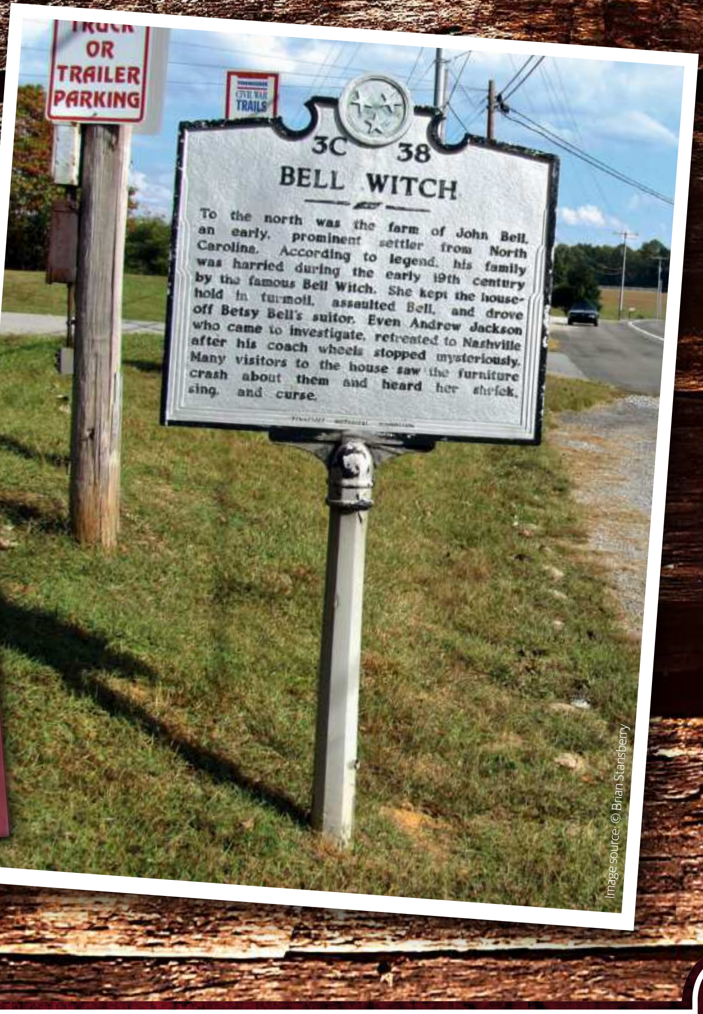
BELL WITCH

And Other Stories of the World's Greatest
Unexplained Phenomenon.

BY

M. V. INGRAM.

Image source: Getty Images



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BELL WITCH

To the north was the farm of John Bell, an early, prominent settler from North Carolina. According to legend, his family was harried during the early 19th century by the famous Bell Witch. She kept the household in turmoil, assaulted Bell, and drove off Betsy Bell's suitor. Even Andrew Jackson who came to investigate, retreated to Nashville after his coach wheels stopped mysteriously. Many visitors to the house saw the furniture crash about them and heard her shriek, sing, and curse.

Image source: © Brian Stansberry

> “She escaped, but the emotional scars were deep. Soon, the poltergeist nightmare developed with a fury”

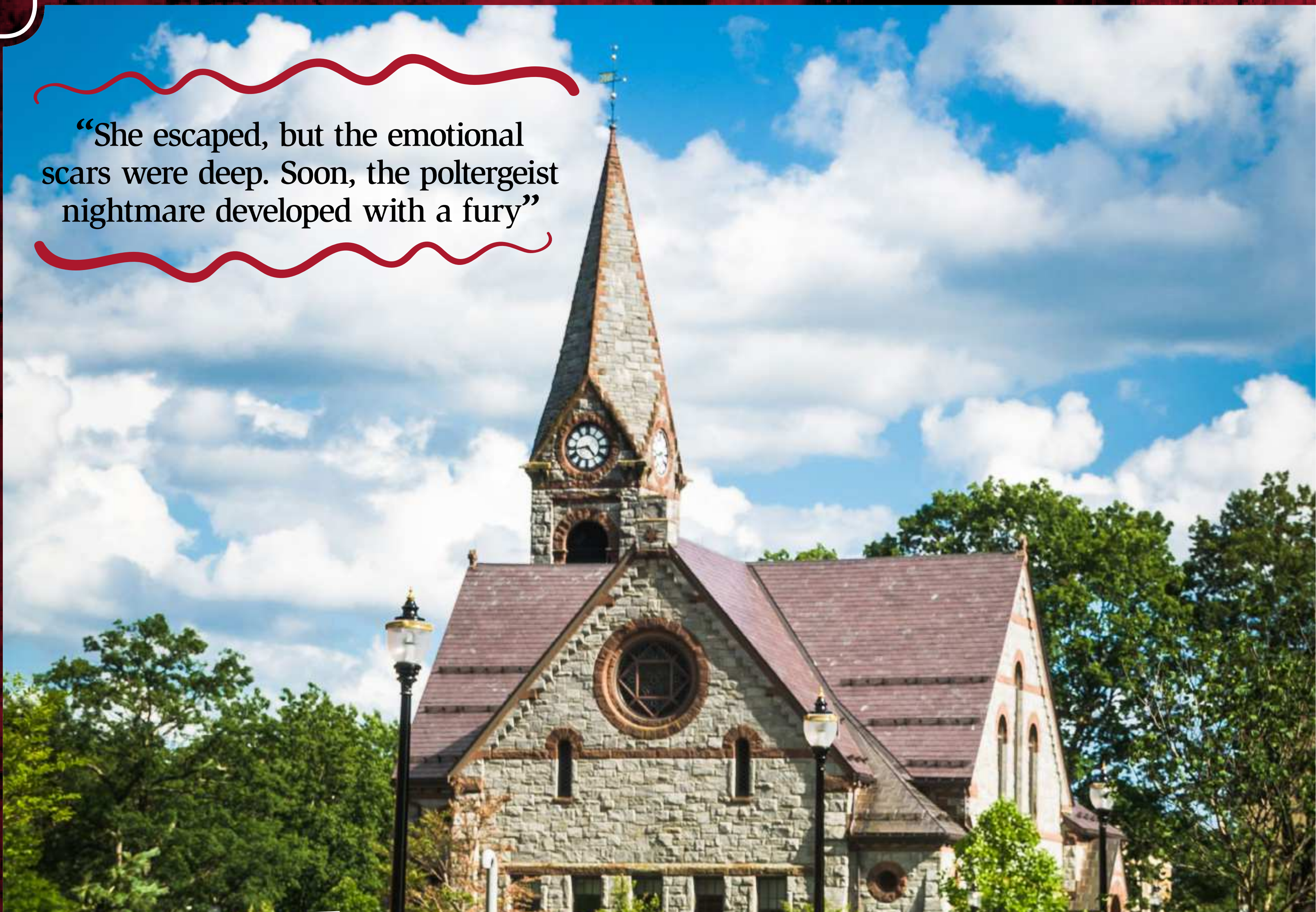
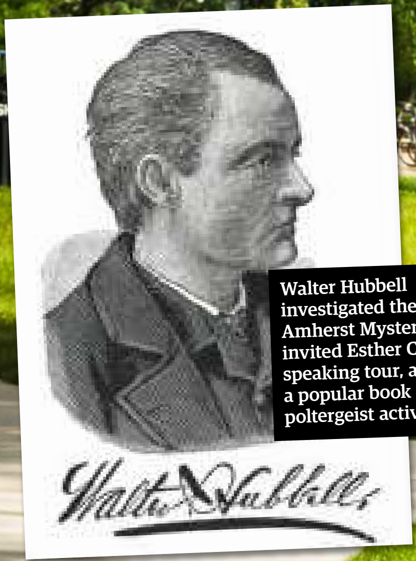


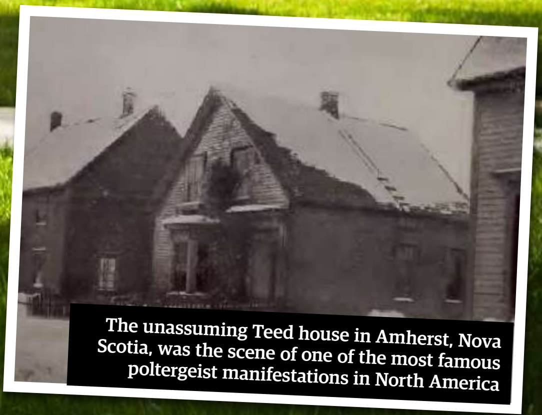
Image source: Sam (Wikipedia)

Modern-day Amherst, Nova Scotia, Canada, still attracts the curious who come to visit the location of the poltergeist occurrences that apparently terrorised Esther Cox



Walter Hubbell

Walter Hubbell investigated the Great Amherst Mystery, invited Esther Cox on a speaking tour, and wrote a popular book about the poltergeist activity



The unassuming Teed house in Amherst, Nova Scotia, was the scene of one of the most famous poltergeist manifestations in North America

THE GREAT AMHURST MYSTERY

A malevolent poltergeist terrorised a young woman in a small town in Nova Scotia in the late 1870s, and left a chilling message

Written by Michael E Haskew

Dr Thomas Caritte was emphatic. “Honestly sceptical persons were on all occasions soon convinced that there was no fraud or deception in the case. Were I to publish the case in the medical journals, as you suggest, I doubt if it would be believed by physicians generally. I am certain I could not have believed such miracles had I not witnessed them.”

The good doctor was describing experiences in the home of Daniel and Olive Tweed in Amherst, Nova Scotia, Canada, during 1878 to 1879. The disturbances, later known as the Great Amherst Mystery, centred on Esther Cox, Olive’s sister. When she was only 18, Esther accompanied Bob McNeal, a shoemaker, on a carriage ride. McNeal attempted to rape the young woman. She escaped, but the emotional scars were deep. Soon, the poltergeist nightmare developed with a fury. The first encounter took place as Esther and her sister, Jennie, settled into bed. They saw movement under the covers but found nothing. The following night, a box of scraps underneath the bed suddenly levitated and spilled its contents. Esther became ill. She awoke screaming in pain, her body swelling, her skin blistered and reddened. Family members witnessed her agony, which subsided with four loud bangs from under the bed.

Esther’s relatives summoned Dr Caritte, who witnessed her pillow pulled from under her head by an unseen hand. Blankets were stripped away, and scratching sounds were heard. Again, four loud noises were audible – from the bed and the roof.

Then, Caritte saw the frightening message scrawled on the bedroom wall: ‘Esther Cox you are mine to kill’. A plaster fragment flew across the room, landing at the doctor’s feet. Caritte returned to the home the following day, witnessing more manifestations, objects flying about, cold water boiling, furniture moving, and fires starting.

As the terror continued, Esther was pricked with pins, scratched and slapped, and stabbed with a knife. She left the Teeds’, but the poltergeist followed, even disrupting a church service. During the ordeal, Walter Hubbell, an investigator attracted by stories he had heard, rented a room in the house. Hubbell recorded strange events, and convinced Esther to embark on a speaking tour. It failed. Sceptics jeered and booed. The poltergeist communicated, leaving several names – among them Maggie Fisher, dead since 1867.

Esther took a job at a nearby farm, and the barn burned down, resulting in charges of arson and a month in prison. Following her release, the visitations faded. Esther married twice and died in 1912 at the age of 52. Hubbell wrote a popular book, *The Great Amherst Mystery: A True Narrative of the Supernatural*, including an affidavit with the signatures of 16 witnesses. The story has inspired modern horror films and television programmes.

THE EXORCISM OF ROLAND DOE

In the late 1940s, a troubled teenage boy experienced terrifying paranormal phenomena that would influence an iconic book and movie decades after

Written by Michael E Haskew

The 20 August 1949 edition of *The Washington Post* carried a story relating the unnerving saga of a boy, 14 years old, who had endured a horrific demonic possession. William Peter Blatty, a student at Georgetown University in Washington, DC, was intrigued.

Blatty later published *The Exorcist*, his iconic work of horror, using the boy's story as a basis for the chilling narrative. A 1973 feature film followed, rocking moviegoers. The real story is no less disturbing.

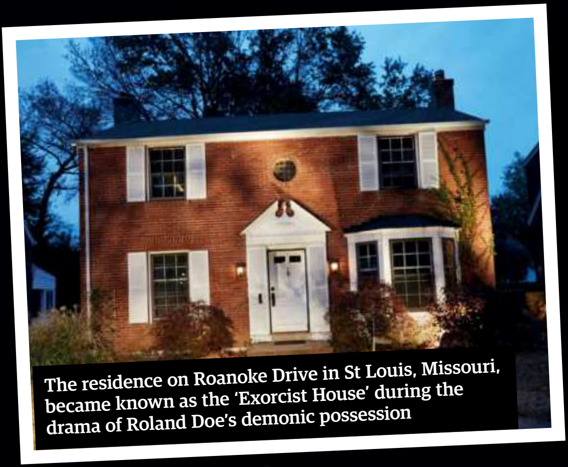
It began in early 1949 when the boy, known publicly as Roland Doe, was living with his family in Cottage City, Maryland. Some accounts allege that the real name of the subject was Ronald Hunkeler, but he was variously known as Roland Doe, Robbie Mannheim and other pseudonyms. The boy had a close relationship with an aunt, Harriet or 'Tillie', a spiritualist who introduced him to the Ouija board's mysticism. Soon after Aunt Tillie died, Roland began experiencing strange phenomena. Scratching sounds were heard under his bed. Religious pictures flew from the walls. The episodes intensified, and his mother and grandmother witnessed the manifestations – including sounds of marching feet and drumbeats while the three lay in bed. Roland's room became the epicentre of the disturbances. His mattress shook. Sheets were raised and stretched tightly. Roland developed scratches and burns on his body. Words appeared to be scrawled into his skin. He spoke in a guttural voice, sang unfamiliar songs, and spoke Latin.

The distraught family called on their Lutheran pastor, who brought Roland to his home for observation. The reverend confirmed the dire situation, and referred them to a Roman Catholic priest. The situation worsened; a portrait of Satan appeared on Roland's leg as he convulsed and spewed foul language. During the first attempt by Catholic priests at exorcism, Roland broke free of hand restraints, tearing away a bedspring and slashing the arm of a priest.

When the word 'Louis' appeared on Roland's body, the family sought help from relatives in St Louis, Missouri, where their residence on Roanoke Drive became known as the 'Exorcist House'. A trio of priests fought these supposed dark forces, and during the course of multiple exorcisms, Roland displayed tremendous strength, breaking the nose of one of the priests. The last exorcism occurred at Alexian Brothers Hospital in April 1949. Finally, Roland was freed and related an incredible vision of St Michael defeating Satan and his minions in battle.

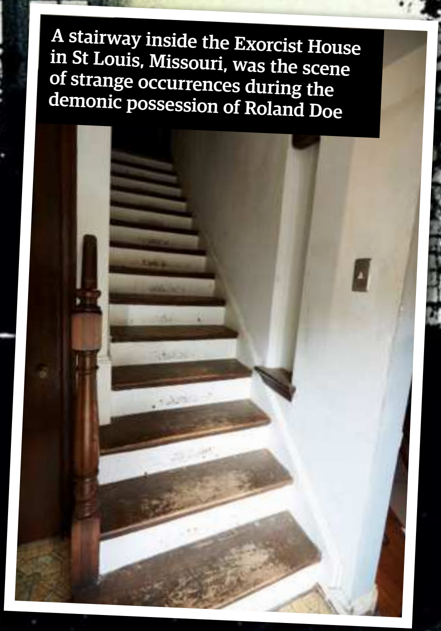
Afterwards, Roland carried on a normal life, married, and worked for the US government. At least 48 witnesses observed strange phenomena during the course of the possession, though, and one of the priests kept a diary of startling details.

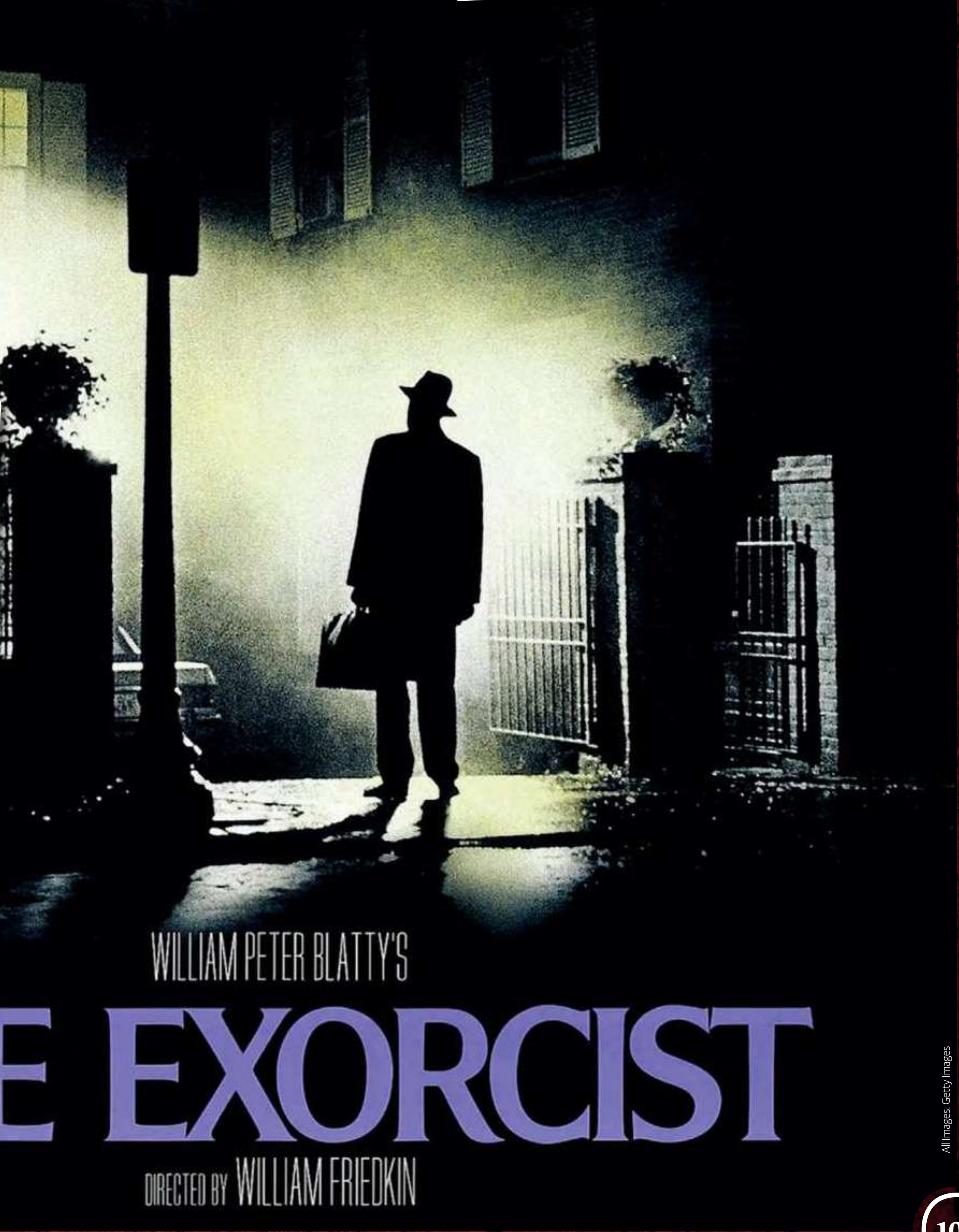
The exorcism of Roland Doe, a teenage boy apparently possessed by demons, served as the basis for a 1970s' blockbuster novel and feature film



The residence on Roanoke Drive in St Louis, Missouri, became known as the 'Exorcist House' during the drama of Roland Doe's demonic possession

A stairway inside the Exorcist House in St Louis, Missouri, was the scene of strange occurrences during the demonic possession of Roland Doe





WILLIAM PETER BLATTY'S
THE EXORCIST
DIRECTED BY WILLIAM FRIEDKIN

All Images: Getty Images

The quiet town of Rosenheim, Germany, in picturesque southern Bavaria, was rocked by a poltergeist episode in a local law office during the late 1960s

Annemarie Schaberl, a 19-year-old secretary in a law firm in Rosenheim, Germany, was suspected as the source of poltergeist activity there

Image source: Getty Images

THE ROSENHEIM POLTERGEIST

The Rosenheim Poltergeist was apparently triggered by the presence of a young secretary, creating disturbances in a Bavarian law office

Written by Michael E Haskew

When the lights began to flicker, a painting rotated on its wall mounting, the copier spontaneously leaked fluid, and a heavy filing cabinet moved inexplicably, the law office of Sigmund Adam in the Bavarian town of Rosenheim, Germany, could not conduct business as usual.

Further, staff members denied making repeated calls to a 'time of day' telephone number as the firm was charged for each one, and eerily on further inspection of records it was determined that the calls were sometimes made in rapid succession – as many as six per minute. The questions mounted. More than 600 calls were made during a five-week period, even though the telephones were unplugged. In one 15-minute interval, the number was dialled 46 times, an impossible feat for the technology of the late 1960s to accomplish.

Baffled, attorney Adam allowed parapsychologist Hans Bender of the Institute of Paranormal Research in Freiburg to investigate. Bender attributed the phenomena to "recurrent spontaneous psychokinesis," or RSPK, and the source of the poltergeist disturbance as secretary Annemarie Schaberl, a 19-year-old woman who was experiencing anxiety over a recently dissolved engagement and difficulties with her job. The painting in the office was actually filmed while rotating, and electrical anomalies were recorded by professionals, when Scharbel entered the premises. The disturbances occurred from the summer of 1967 to January 1968, and Bender labelled them as the work of a "typical poltergeist." He believed the energy that caused them emanated from the secretary, and was the result of her discontent. The strange occurrences coincided with Schaberl's presence in the office, and when she left her employment with the firm the phenomena ceased. However, it was later reported that electrical power surges took place at her subsequent employers. She reportedly married in 1969, and no more reports of strange occurrences surfaced.

The Rosenheim Poltergeist has been the subject of severe criticism, suggesting that Bender's investigation was flawed. In an article in the German weekly newspaper *Der Zeit* published in April 1970, the authors asserted that they visited the law offices and found wires attached to various objects that when manipulated would cause them to move. Another stated that no complete report of the Bender investigation had ever been made public. A third asserted that equipment used to measure changes in electrical current had been produced fraudulently, direct evidence of a hoax.

Neither proven beyond doubt nor totally debunked, the Rosenheim Poltergeist remains the object of curiosity to this day.

Hans Bender, a parapsychologist, investigated the strange phenomena in the law office of Sigmund Adam in Rosenheim, Germany, identifying a young secretary as the source

THE ENFIELD POLTERGEIST

The manifestations of a poltergeist named Bill in the late 1970s led to one of Britain's most celebrated such cases of unexplained phenomena

Written by Michael E Haskew

There was obvious distress in Peggy Hodgson's voice when she called local police to her rented terrace home in Enfield, North London, where the single mother was raising four children.

As her children prepared for bed that August evening in 1977, Peggy heard a strange noise upstairs. Thinking it was her younger daughters, 13-year-old Margaret and 11-year-old Janet, scuffling, she went for a look. While the girls were indeed playing, something terrifying did happen. A heavy chest began sliding across the room, apparently without assistance. When Peggy began shoving it back, she met strong resistance from an unseen force. The chest moved a second time, faster. Aghast, Peggy and the girls left quickly.

When police officers arrived, they found nothing unusual – until they started to leave. Years later, one of them remembered a chair in the living room rising a half-inch off the floor and moving across the room. After checking for wires and other unseen reasons for the episode, the police left. However, the soon-to-be called Enfield Poltergeist did not. For months, the poltergeist wreaked havoc, apparently throwing objects across rooms and making noises.

As news of the phenomena leaked out, sceptics accused the girls of being the source. In desperation, Peggy contacted the Society for Psychical Research. Two investigators, Guy Lyon Playfair and Maurice Grosse, responded, hiring a barrister, Mary Rose Barrington, to verify their research. During more than a year on the premises, the investigators recorded numerous incidents, including Playfair's encounter after hearing a loud noise. He entered an upstairs room to find the entire Victorian-era fireplace, probably weighing 60 pounds, ripped from the wall – hardly an act that young girls were capable of performing.

Witnesses saw Janet levitate, and she was dragged by an unknown entity from her bedroom and down the stairs. She also broke into disturbing fits of cursing, and an eerie voice was heard. When the investigators posed questions, the voice replied that it belonged to a man named Bill, who had lived in the house and died in a chair years earlier. A record search revealed that a man named Bill Wilkins had lived in the house and died there.

The bedroom shared by Janet and Margaret Hodgson was the scene of much of the havoc wreaked by the elusive Enfield Poltergeist

Image source: Alamy

Throughout the investigation, the girls were suspected of playing tricks, and they admitted as much later on, but claimed only one or two per cent of the occurrences were their doing. 30 years after the events subsided, Janet told an interviewer, "I know from my own experience that it was real. It lived off me, off my energy."

Although the sceptics persist, the poltergeist activity in Enfield remains largely unexplained.

"For months, the Enfield Poltergeist wreaked havoc, apparently throwing objects across rooms and making noises... sceptics accused the girls of being the source"

17 February 1978; investigators review evidence of the the Enfield Poltergeist at the Hodgson home on Green Street, where two girls were reportedly tormented

Image source: Alamy

The four Hodgson children, Janet, Margaret, Billy, and Johnny experienced the terror of the Enfield Poltergeist, but the daughters admitted to some fakery

Image source: Alamy

Image source: Getty Images

HAUNTED HOUSES

114 The haunted house
118 Malahide Castle
120 Himeji Castle
122 Glamis Castle
124 Borley Rectory
126 The Winchester Mystery House

Image source: Getty Images

Image source: Alamy

Image source: Getty Images

Image source: Getty Images

THE HAUNTED HOUSE

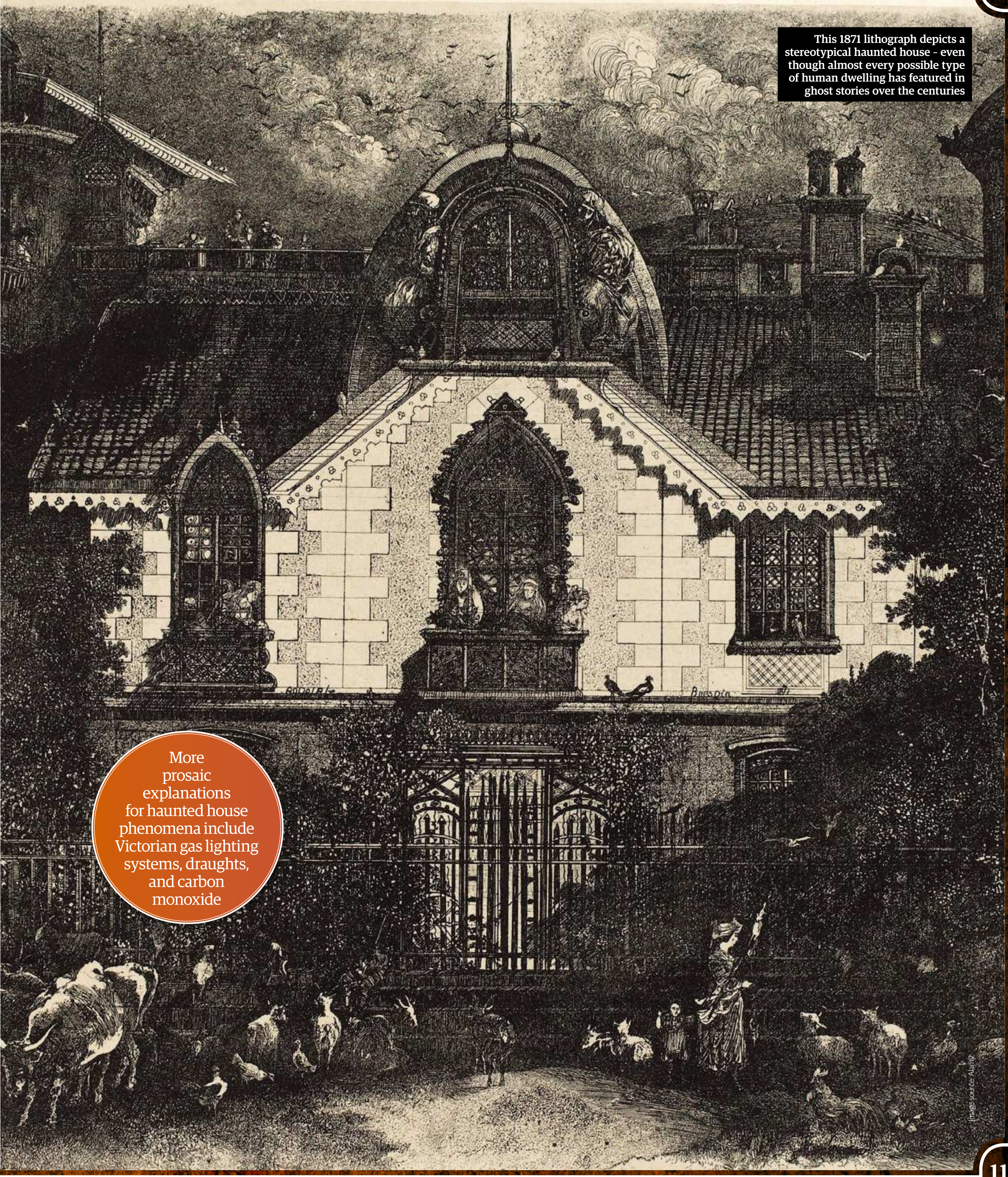
Haunted houses have fascinated us since ancient times, but is there a scientific reason why people often claim to experience supernatural incidents in certain buildings?

Written by Melanie Clegg

For as long as people have been interested in spooky stories of ghosts and phantoms, they have been just as fascinated by the buildings linked to these tales, some of which have attained a celebrity of their own over the centuries thanks to the unexplained and mysterious occurrences that have happened within their walls.

The earliest known haunted house appears in a letter written by the ancient Roman lawyer and author Pliny the Younger to his patron, Lucius Sura. Pliny recounted the tale of an old house in Athens, Greece that had been considered uninhabitable for several years because the local residents believed that it was haunted by the terrifying spectre of an old man bound in chains. Tempted by the low rent and undaunted by the house's creepy reputation, the philosopher Athenodorus moved into the house and was visited by the ghost, who beckoned to him and then led him to a spot in the courtyard, where it disappeared. The following day, Athenodorus and a group of local people dug up the spot where the ghost had vanished and discovered the skeleton of an old man, who had obviously been murdered. When the bones were carefully reburied according to the custom of the area, the ghost was never seen again and Athenodorus was able to enjoy his house in peace. This ancient tale has many of the hallmarks of what would become the haunted house tradition - in particular the idea that buildings could be haunted by restless spirits who were trapped and unable to move on, either because they had died there or had been buried on the premises.

Over the centuries, tales about haunted houses have continued to proliferate, with virtually every culture and country having more than one example. Perhaps the best known haunted houses are in Britain, where a preoccupation with the country's famously violent history has imbued hundreds of buildings - from grand castles to humble terraced houses - with a sinister reputation, allegedly leading almost half of the population to believe that a building can be haunted. Meanwhile, although America's history has been arguably a little less eventful, it too has more than its fair share of haunted houses, many of which- such as southern plantation mansions - are linked to the darker side of the nation's past while others, such as the house at the heart of the *Amityville Horror* story are allegedly testament to more recent traumas. According to a *Time* magazine article, the Whaley House in San Diego, which was built in 1857, is the most haunted house in



This 1871 lithograph depicts a stereotypical haunted house - even though almost every possible type of human dwelling has featured in ghost stories over the centuries

More prosaic explanations for haunted house phenomena include Victorian gas lighting systems, draughts, and carbon monoxide

Image source: Alamy

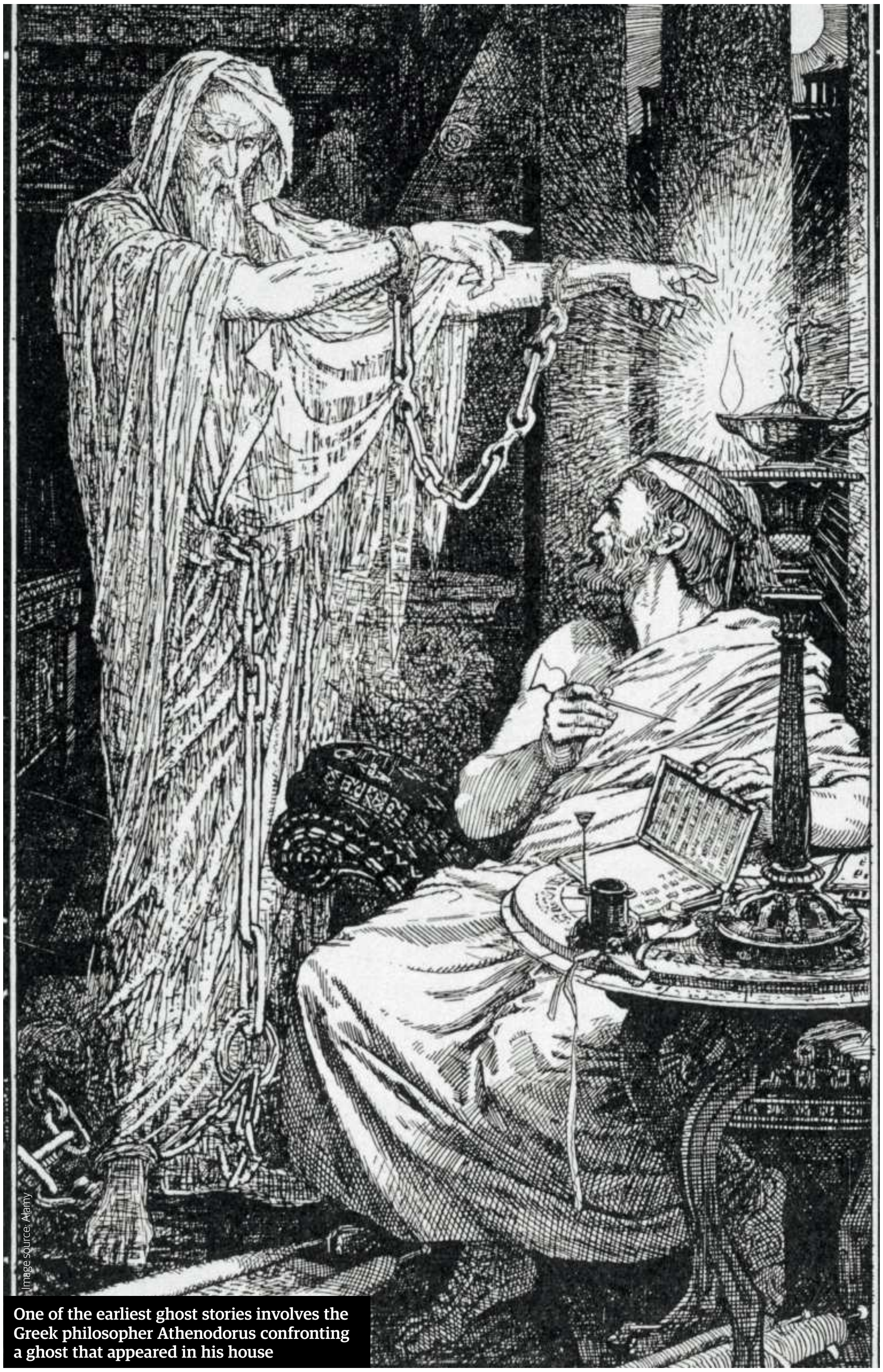


Image source: Alamy

One of the earliest ghost stories involves the Greek philosopher Athenodorus confronting a ghost that appeared in his house

America thanks to a number of tragic events that have occurred within its walls and rumours of strange noises and other phenomena.

Meanwhile, in South Africa, ghost stories abound about the 17th-century Castle of Good Hope in Cape Town, which is believed to be the oldest existing building in the country and has numerous links to South Africa's bloody history, having been used as both a prison and an army barracks. Many soldiers who have been posted there have reported hearing screams, footsteps and other noises late at night, while other visitors claim to have felt cold and uneasy in certain areas and to have seen a spectral soldier and a ghostly woman dressed in grey, believed to be Lady Anne Barnard, who lived in the castle at the end of the 18th century. One of the most haunted houses in China is Chaonei No. 81 in Beijing, which had always had a creepy reputation in the city but became more widely famous in 2014 after the horror film *The House That Never Dies* was set there. The house is allegedly haunted by the ghost of a young woman who took her own life and is apparently so spooky that even a group of Chinese Red Guards who stayed there in the 1960s fled after just a few days, while it's alleged that other visitors to the house have mysteriously vanished, never to be seen again.

There are many reputedly haunted houses in other parts of Asia, such as the Morgan House in Kalimpong – a colonial mansion that is said to be haunted by the restless spirit of its first owner, Mrs Morgan, who is said to have been murdered by her husband. Perhaps the most famous haunted house in Malaysia is the Kinarut Mansion, a ruin believed by some to be haunted by a 'Hantu Tinggi' (a Malay ghost that takes the form of a tree) as well as a 'Pontianak' (a sad Malay vampiric spirit who is said to be the ghost of a woman who died during pregnancy).

While many people believe that houses can become haunted – usually either because of a traumatic event like a murder or fatal accident occurring within their walls or, more romantically, because an individual was so attached to the building that they either refused to leave or decided to return after their death – others are of the opinion that hauntings are caused by more prosaic factors, many of which can simply be linked to the age of most of the properties, which make them more susceptible to draughts as well as creaks, groans and other unexpected noises. Meanwhile, some researchers suspect that exposure to carbon monoxide may be at the heart of many alleged hauntings, with sufferers experiencing light headedness, hallucinations, feelings of dread and other symptoms that have often been linked to alleged haunted houses. The fact that many reports of haunted houses have their origins in the Victorian era has also caused some researchers to wonder if the substances involved in gas lighting may be to blame as in large doses, they could potentially have caused mild hallucinations and other physical symptoms such as lethargy, depression, disassociation and intense sadness, all commonly associated with hauntings. Other sensations, such as allegations of being touched or pushed by invisible forces or seeing objects moving by themselves, are more difficult to explain, but could also potentially be due to sensory hallucinations or physical ailments, such as restless leg syndrome or even dementia. It's also true that the rich and fascinating history of some of the haunted buildings can create a form of confirmation bias that makes some more sensitive and imaginative visitors susceptible to believing that they have experienced a supernatural event - for example, the famous incident in the gardens of Versailles when two women claimed to encounter Marie Antoinette and various members of her entourage. It's also true that just the knowledge that the building is reputed to be haunted might be enough to cause some sensitive visitors, who are now in a heightened sense of alert and apprehension, to believe that they too have experienced a ghostly encounter. In other cases, it may be that 'waking dreams' or hypnagogia - a rare sensory illusion that commonly occurs in the brief period between sleep and true wakefulness and which can cause lucid dreaming, sleep paralysis and even hallucinations - may be involved in many alleged hauntings as sufferers often talk about feeling or even seeing presences around them while in this state, or experience feelings of intense fear, sadness and depression - all of which are commonly said to be felt by people in haunted houses.

Whatever the truth, even in an increasingly cynical age, haunted houses continue to fascinate, with cynics and believers alike flocking to visit them in the hopes of either debunking the myths or enjoying a spectral encounter of their own. Although in the past, the local haunted house would usually be avoided by most of the community, with only thrill-seeking children and teenagers passing through its doors, nowadays haunted houses are big business, with several thousand operating as tourist attractions in America alone. In the United Kingdom, mentioning the fact that a building is haunted is usually seen as a huge draw, especially if it is possible to spend the night. Not everyone is a fan though - in 1991, an American court case ruled that sellers must disclose to potential buyers if the property has ever allegedly been haunted as this can affect its future value. Popularly known as the 'Ghostbusters Ruling', this came about when a New York woman sold her house without informing the new owner that the house had a local reputation for being haunted by at least three ghosts, including a soldier from the American War of Independence, and that she and her family had claimed numerous times over the years to have experienced paranormal incidents in their home. When the new owner discovered the truth, he was forced to take legal action in order to back out of the sale, which created so much publicity that the estate agents quickly found themselves inundated with other prospective buyers, all keen to own a haunted house of their very own.

> "Cynics and believers alike flock to visit them in the hopes of either debunking the myths or enjoying a spectral encounter of their own"

Image source: Alamy

The pretty Whaley House in San Diego is reputed to be one of the most haunted houses in America, boasting no fewer than three ghosts

THE CARSON MANSION

What do you picture when you try to imagine a typical haunted house?

When people think of haunted houses, they very often picture a spooky Gothic mansion with ornate gables and turrets, perhaps not realising that the prototype for this image is an actual house in California. Built in the mid-1880s in the town of Eureka, the Carson Mansion was the brainchild of a wealthy businessman who wanted a grand mansion in the then-highly fashionable and ornate Queen Anne architectural style, an offshoot of the Eastlake style, that was intended to evoke the rambling, asymmetrical, romantic appearance of baronial British architecture with porches, spindly gothic detailing, Dutch gables, stained glass windows and towers - all of which we now often associate with haunted houses. Although this ornate style has often been derided over the years, the Carson Mansion is now much admired and has been described as one of the finest examples of 19th-century architecture in America. However, despite its famously creepy appearance, which has resulted in it appearing - albeit heavily doctored - on posters, book covers and other media, and even led to it inspiring the haunted Mystic Manor in the Hong Kong Disneyland, there have been no known reports of any paranormal activity inside the Carson Mansion, which is now owned by a private members club.

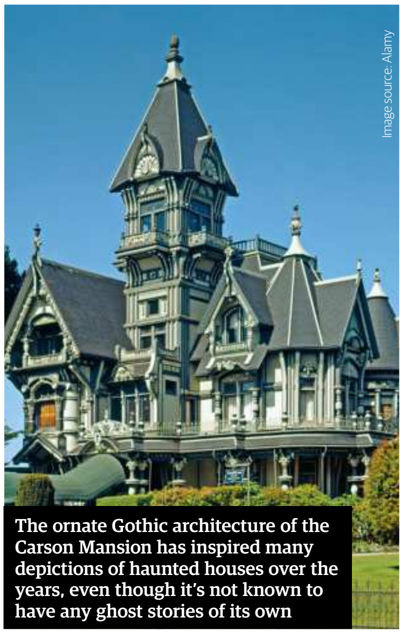
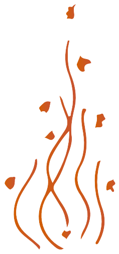


Image source: Alamy

The ornate Gothic architecture of the Carson Mansion has inspired many depictions of haunted houses over the years, even though it's not known to have any ghost stories of its own



MALAHIDE CASTLE

This 800-year-old former fortress is said to be the most haunted castle in Ireland, boasting five terrifying ghosts

Written by Melanie Clegg

The imposing Malahide Castle to the north of Dublin was seat of the Talbot family for an impressive 791 years from 1185, when the land was first granted to Richard Talbot by Henry II, until 1976 when the estate was sold to the Irish State. Thanks to this long history and its position close to the Irish capital, Malahide has witnessed more than its fair share of drama and turmoil over the centuries. This has included the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, during which the Talbots came out on the side of the deposed Catholic king James II – only to lose all but one of the 14 male members of the family who fought that day.

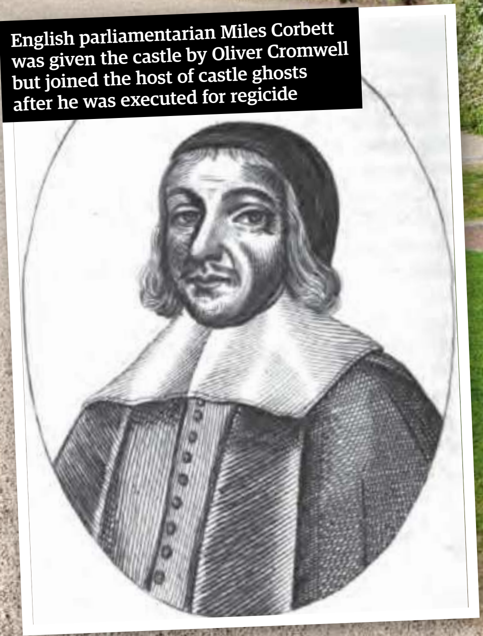
40 years earlier, in 1649, the castle was seized by Oliver Cromwell and given to his supporter, the MP for Yarmouth, Miles Corbett, who signed the death warrant of Charles I and was subsequently hanged, drawn and quartered for regicide two years after the restoration of Charles II. It's said that Corbett's spirit not only appears in the castle's great hall on the anniversary of his execution, but that he also occasionally manifests in full armour that then falls apart around him in four pieces, apparently reflecting the gruesome manner of his death.

Another one of the castle's ghosts allegedly dates from the 16th century and is said to be the spirit of a dwarf jester called Puck who fell in love with the beautiful Lady Eleanor Fitzgerald. He either took his own life after being rejected or was murdered by her family to prevent them from eloping, but nonetheless he is said to be a mischievous ghost who loves to prank visitors and appear in photographs.

But the best-known phantoms at Malahide are said to be the ghosts of Walter Hussey, Lord Galtrim, and his love, Lady Matilda Plunkett. According to legend, Hussey was killed by a love rival on his way to his wedding and now haunts the halls of Malahide, clutching a fearful spear wound in his side and groaning in agony. Lady Matilda also haunts the castle along with her second husband, with whom she had an extremely stormy relationship – to the extent that she has reportedly been seen chasing his ghost through the castle corridors.

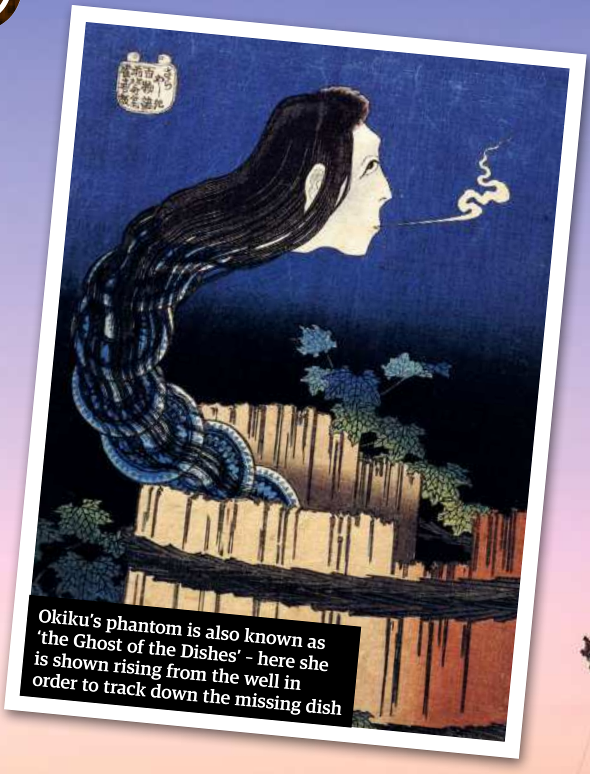
The other female ghost said to haunt Malahide is much more sedate. A beautiful young lady in white, her portrait hangs in the great hall and she has allegedly been seen walking around the castle at night.

Malahide Castle is said to be haunted by five ghosts including a white lady, a lovesick jester called Puck and a pair of star-crossed lovers



English parliamentarian Miles Corbett was given the castle by Oliver Cromwell but joined the host of castle ghosts after he was executed for regicide

Image source: Getty Images



Okiku's phantom is also known as 'the Ghost of the Dishes' – here she is shown rising from the well in order to track down the missing dish

Beautiful Himeji Castle in Japan gets its nickname, 'White Heron Castle', from its pristine white exterior and resemblance to a graceful bird in flight

Image source: Getty Images

HIMEJI CASTLE

A beautiful Japanese castle is the location for the chilling ghost story that inspired the terrifying horror film *The Ring*

Written by Melanie Clegg

Himeji Castle, first founded in 1333, is so beautiful that it is commonly also known as 'White Heron Castle' because its elegant distinctive white facade is said to resemble a heron soaring through the sky. However, despite its tranquil appearance, Himeji was designed for war.

The castle boasts a unique defensive system that involves multitudes of loopholes allowing defenders to rain arrows down on their attackers, as well as a perplexing maze of paths around its keep and walkways that go back on themselves. Meanwhile, the distinctive Kawara ceramic tiles on the roof are also said to be imbued with magical properties intended to keep evil spirits at bay and protect the building's inhabitants from attack.

However, despite this magical protection, Himeji is also said to be the location for one of the most famous Japanese ghost stories: that of Okiku and the well. There are several versions of the legend, but one of the most common is that the beautiful maidservant Okiku caught the eye of her master, Tessan Aoyama, who tried to make her his mistress behind his wife's back. When Okiku refused, he hid one of his wife's precious gold plates, which Okiku had the honoured job of looking after, and told the unfortunate girl that if she did not agree to his request, he would tell her mistress that she had stolen it. Unable to find the hidden plate and terrified of her mistress' anger, the distraught Okiku threw herself down the castle well, confounding Tessan, who decided not to return the plate and continued to blame Okiku for its absence.

However, shortly after her suicide, Okiku began to haunt the castle and would be seen, dressed in white with her hair hanging loose and dismembered hands and feet, dragging herself out of the well, then making her way on all fours to the cupboard where the nine remaining gold plates were kept. When she reached them, she would desperately count them and then scream in anguish when she reached the spot where the tenth missing plate should have been. Unsurprisingly, Tessan was driven mad with guilt but still refused to return the stolen plate, with the consequence that Okiku is said to still haunt the castle to this day.

GLAMIS CASTLE

Ancestral home to the earls of Strathmore, Glamis Castle is thought to be the most haunted stately home in Scotland

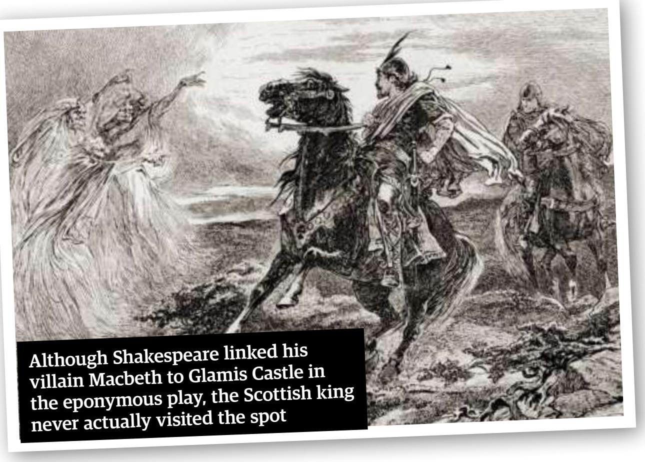
Written by Melanie Clegg

Although beautiful, romantic Glamis Castle is now perhaps best known as the childhood home of Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, and birthplace of her younger daughter Princess Margaret, over the years it has also become synonymous with several ghost stories as a result of its connections to Scotland's dark and bloody past and mention in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

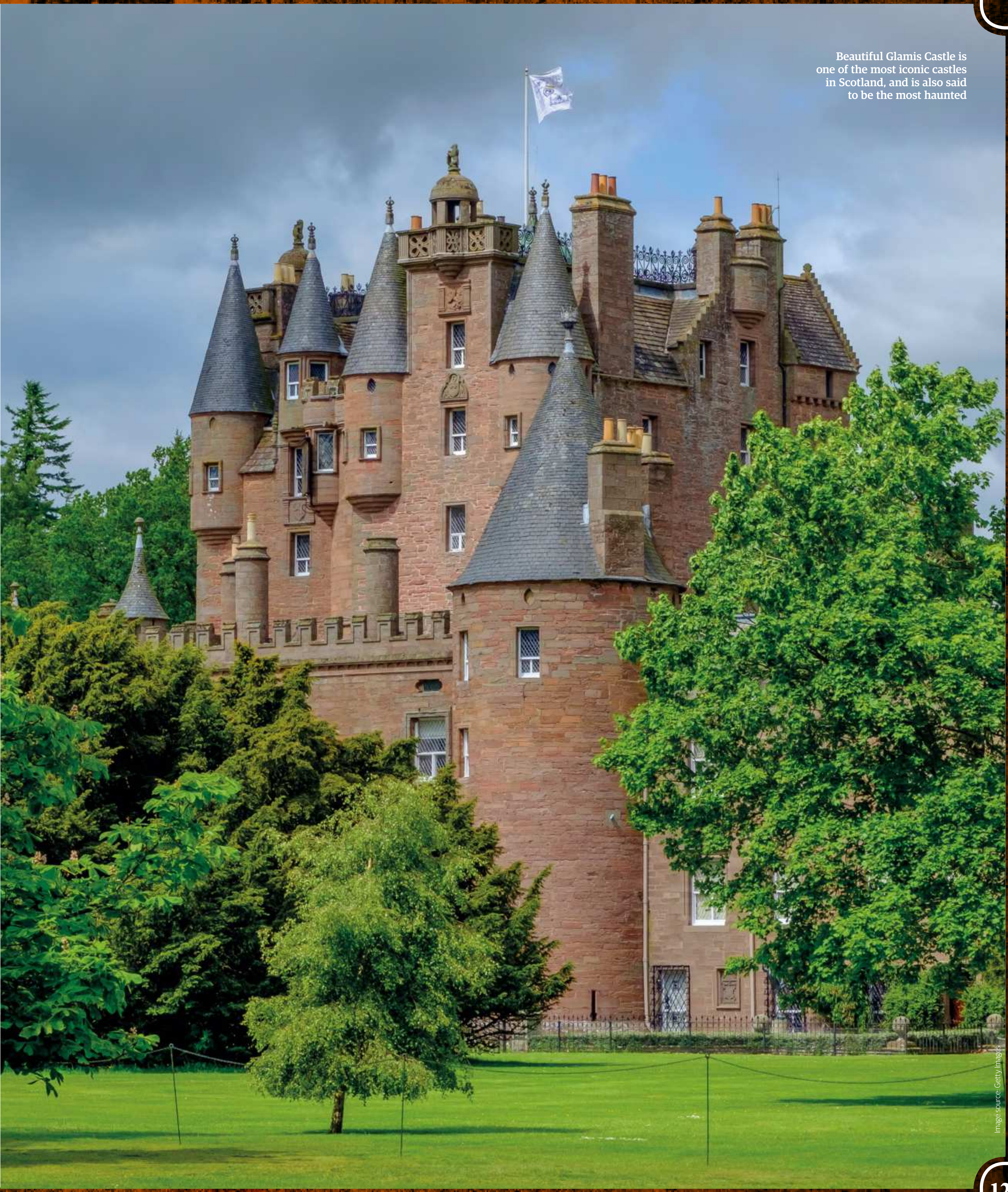
In the 11th century, Glamis was a royal hunting lodge where, in 1034, the Scottish king Malcolm II was either murdered or died after escaping a nearby battle. The castle remained in royal hands until 1372, when it was granted to Robert II's son-in-law Sir John Lyon, Thane of Glamis, who replaced the lodge with a castle. The Lyon family remained close to the royal Stewarts until the 16th century, when James V, father of Mary Queen of Scots, had Janet Douglas, wife of the Sixth Lord Glamis, arrested for treason and witchcraft and burnt at the stake in Edinburgh Castle in July 1537. After such a violent end, it's no wonder that many people believe that the mysterious 'Grey Lady' who haunts the chapel and clock tower at Glamis is the wraith of the unfortunate Lady Janet.

Meanwhile, the West Tower of the castle is said to be haunted by the spectre of Earl Beardie, said to be Alexander Lindsay, Fourth Earl of Crawford, a man of such evil character that on at least one occasion he hunted one of his own servants before setting his dogs on the unfortunate man, who is also said to haunt the castle. According to legend, when the wicked earl and his cronies committed sacrilege by playing cards on the Sabbath, it attracted the attention of the Devil, who disguised himself as a fellow gambler and won the earl's soul, forcing him to play cards for all eternity.

Perhaps the most spine-tingling legend associated with the Castle is that of the Monster of Glamis, who is said to have been the true heir to the earldom but was so deformed that his parents had him raised in secret in one of the castle's many hidden rooms. According to legend, an unfortunate maidservant accidentally saw the boy and had her tongue cut out to ensure that she could never tell anyone else – eventually becoming yet another one of the castle's many ghosts herself, with more than one visitor claiming to have seen a spectral woman with a bleeding mouth. It's said that the identity of the 'monster' is passed on to every heir to the earldom when he comes of age, with the Queen Mother's own father once saying: "If you could even guess the nature of this castle's secret, you would get down on your knees and thank God it was not yours."



Although Shakespeare linked his villain Macbeth to Glamis Castle in the eponymous play, the Scottish king never actually visited the spot



Beautiful Glamis Castle is one of the most iconic castles in Scotland, and is also said to be the most haunted

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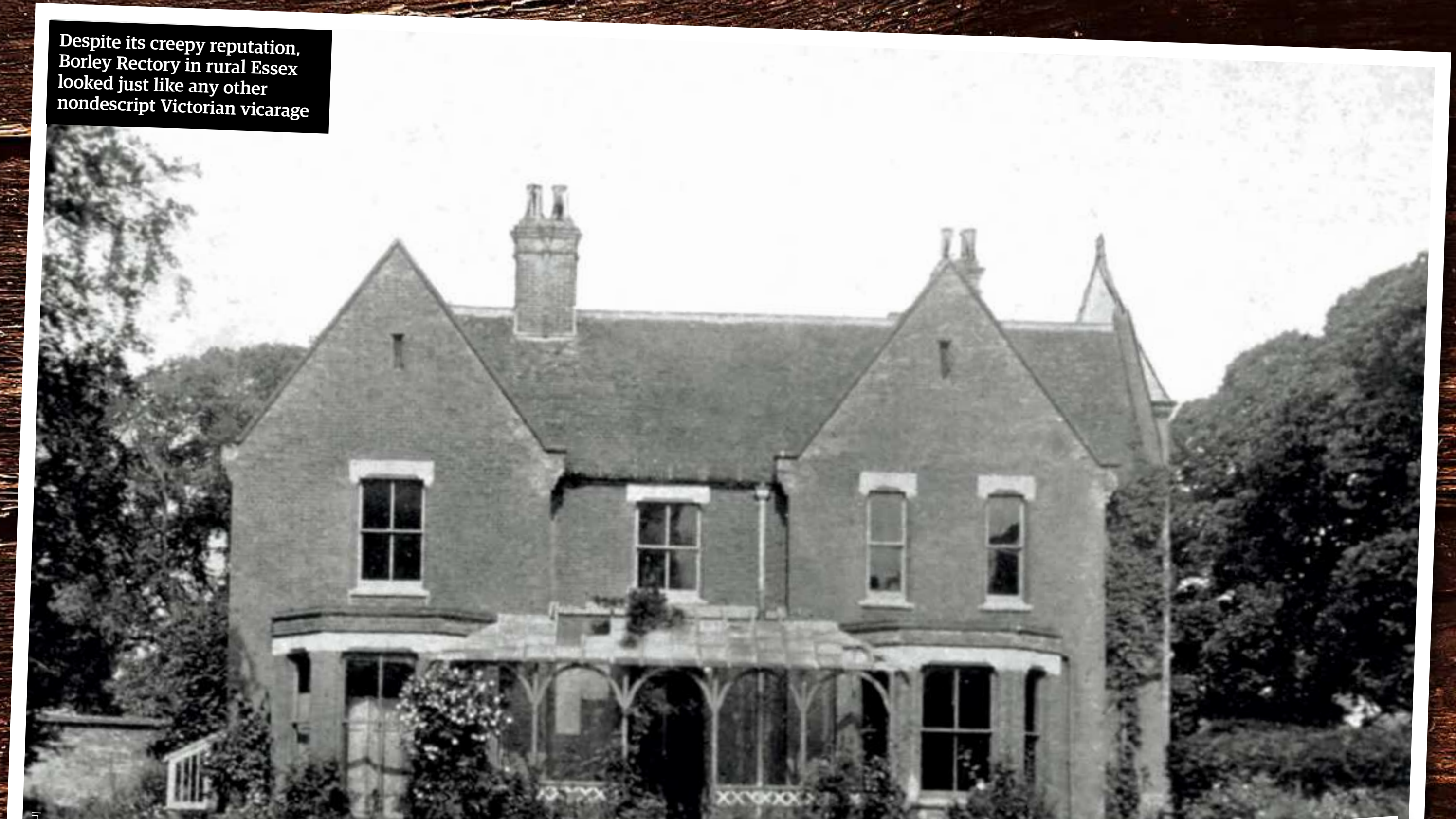

Despite its creepy reputation, Borley Rectory in rural Essex looked just like any other nondescript Victorian vicarage

Image source: Alamy

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Borley is one of Harry Price's most famous cases, but it has been alleged that he faked many of the phenomena himself

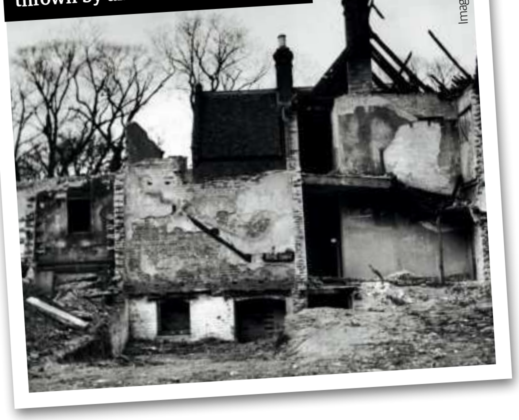

The photographer who took this shot of the burnt-out rectory in 1944 claimed that the white object in the doorway was a brick thrown by an invisible force

Image source: Getty Images

BORLEY RECTORY

In 1929, an obscure country rectory in Essex hit the headlines as the most haunted house in Britain, but was this a true haunting or simply a hoax?

Written by Melanie Clegg

Built in 1862 to replace the original rectory that had burned down in 1841, Borley Rectory initially appeared to be a typical insignificant red-brick Victorian house in the Gothic style favoured at the time. The first residents were the Reverend Henry Dawson Ellis Bull and his family, which included 14 children. Although there were no known reports of paranormal occurrences before the building of the new house, shortly after the family had moved in rumours began to fly around the village of unexplained noises and activity in the building, while four of the rector's young daughters reported seeing a spectral nun in the grounds. Upon discovering that there had once been a monastery on the site, the children concocted a lurid tale involving the nun being walled up alive after falling in love with one of the Borley monks. This was clearly untrue, but nonetheless over the years there were several alleged sightings of the nun as well as a ghostly carriage driven by two headless coachmen.

When Reverend Bull died in 1927, the rectory became home to his successor, Reverend Smith, and his family, who also reported strange, possibly supernatural occurrences around the house. More alarmingly, Mrs Smith discovered the skull of a young woman while clearing out a cupboard. It was the Smiths who took the step of contacting the Society for Psychical Research, as well as the famous paranormal investigator Harry Price, who visited for the first time in June 1929. He reported such supernatural phenomenon as spirit messages, stone throwing and objects moving – which the Smiths believed he did himself because they stopped as soon as he left. Price would return to Borley in 1937 after the departure of the Smiths' successors, the Foysters, who reported serious poltergeist activity as well as being physically attacked by an unseen presence in the house. Price rented the house for a year and recruited ghost hunters to spend time there and record paranormal activity, during which time they claimed to have made contact with a murdered nun called Marie and also a more vengeful spirit calling itself Sunex Amures, who threatened to set fire to the rectory on 27 March 1938. However, it was not until the following year, on 27 February, that the infamous Borley Rectory went up in flames after its new owner accidentally knocked over an oil lamp. Although many of the stories about the rectory are now known to have been fake, modern-day ghost hunters still claim to see spectral lights and hear strange noises at the site where it once stood.

THE WINCHESTER MYSTERY HOUSE

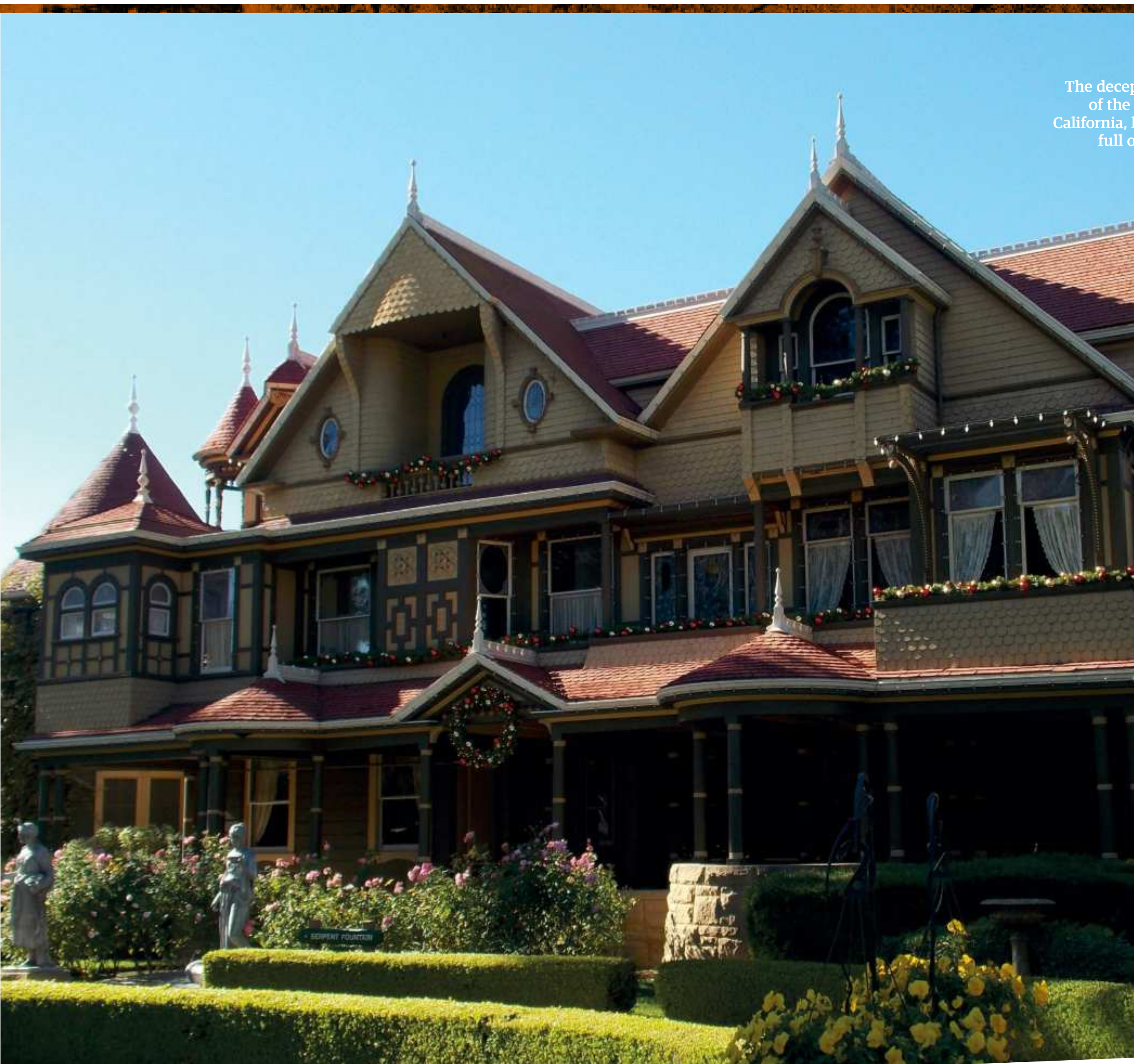
The spookily enigmatic house in California remains one of the greatest architectural puzzles of all time

Written by Melanie Clegg

When gun magnate William Wirt Winchester, sole owner of the Winchester Repeating Arms Company, died of tuberculosis in March 1881, he left his grieving widow, Sarah, with a half share in the family business as well as an enormous fortune of $20 million, which provided her with a daily income of $1,000 ($26,469 in 2020) a day. According to legend, Sarah visited a spiritualist, through whom her husband's spirit told her that they had been cursed by the blood money that they had made from selling their rifles. In order to break the curse she needed to build a house for them all. Not only that, the medium warned her, but as soon as she stopped building, the spirits would catch up with her and she would die.

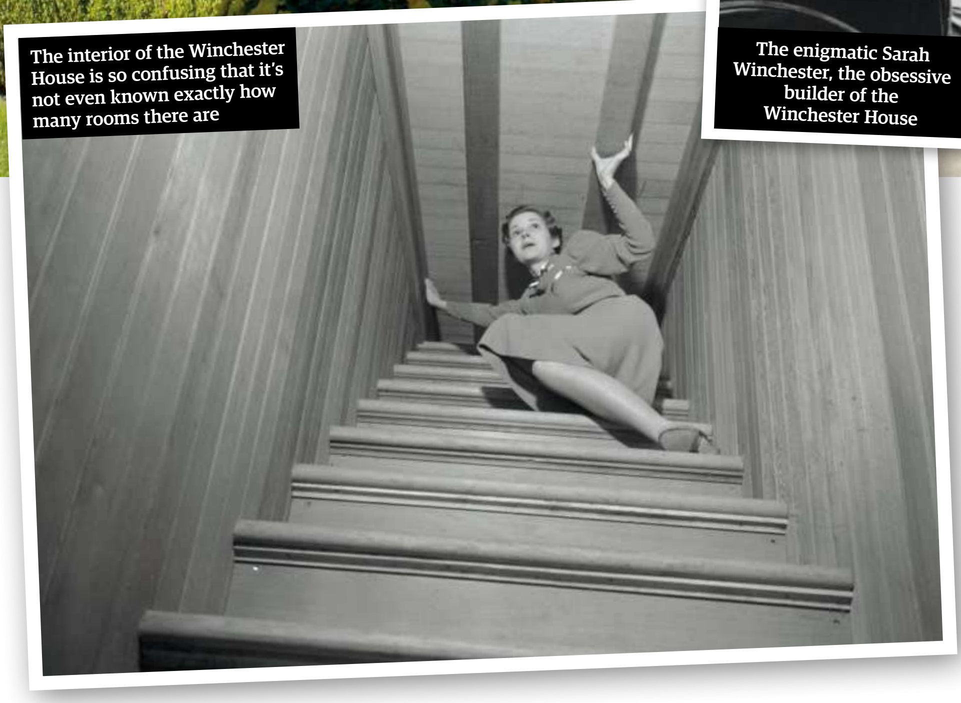
Although the Winchesters had been based in Connecticut, in 1884 Sarah chose to cross the country to San Jose in California, where she had bought an eight-roomed farmhouse and 140 acres of land, in order to begin her complex building project. Over the next 38 years, Sarah worked tirelessly on her project, employing dozens of local craftsmen who were given daily instructions to add to the labyrinthine building, creating secret rooms, trap doors, skylights, staircases and doors that led nowhere, and other peculiar and pointless architectural features, which led to rumours that she was trying to appease the spirits with a neverending architectural project.

Alongside the crazy architecture, Sarah insisted that her house feature her favourite spiderweb motif as well as reflect her fascination with the number 13, which appeared in many of the interior details and may have been used to ward off the evil spirits that she believed were pursuing her. By the time Sarah Winchester died in her sleep in September 1922, her mysterious



The deceptively peaceful looking facade of the Winchester House in San Jose, California, hides an extraordinary interior full of secrets and, allegedly, ghosts

The enigmatic Sarah Winchester, the obsessive builder of the Winchester House



The interior of the Winchester House is so confusing that it's not even known exactly how many rooms there are

house was seven storeys high and incorporated 47 staircases and fireplaces, 2,000 doors, 10,000 windows and six kitchens. It's not known precisely how many rooms there are, but the closest estimate is 160.

Within just a few months of her death, the house was opened to the public and although there have been no recorded sightings of ghosts, many have reported feeling extremely unsettled and even frightened as they wander deeper into the labyrinth of rooms, especially on the third floor where Mrs Winchester's servants once lived, and where a few visitors have reported hearing disembodied footsteps and whispers.

Image sources: Getty Images

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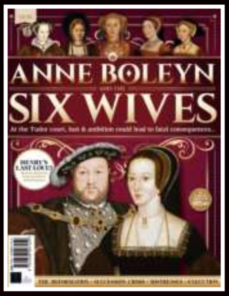

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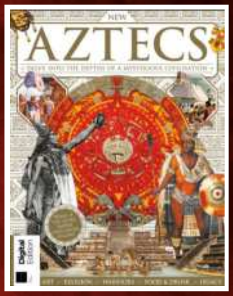

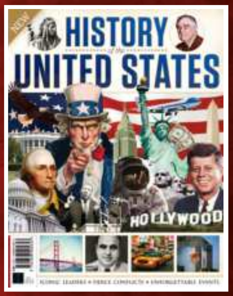

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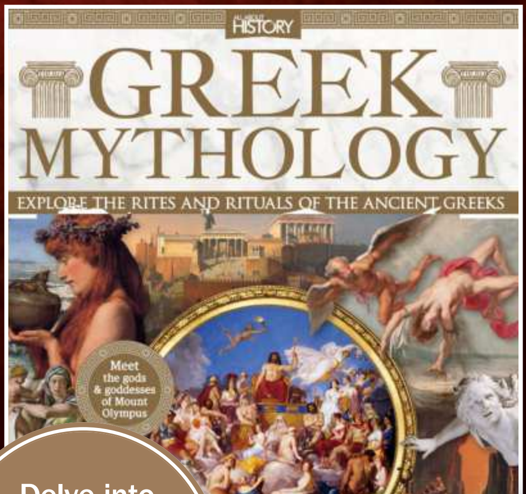
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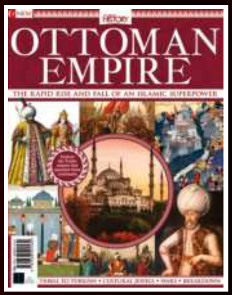
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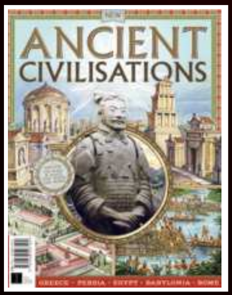
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